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THE CAMBRIDGE ANTHOLOGIES

GENERAL EDITOR: J. DOVER WILSON, LITT.D.

LIFE  
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

IN FOUR VOLUMES  
VOLUME I



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### SCULPTURES FROM NOTRE DAME DE DIJON

(L. Gonse, *L'Art Gothique*, p. 217.) From an upper gallery of the façade, but contemporaneous with the portal spoken of in the text.

LIFE  
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

SELECTED  
TRANSLATED & ANNOTATED  
BY

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VOLUME I  
RELIGION, FOLK-LORE  
AND SUPERSTITION

with 13 illustrations

CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
MCMXXVIII



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PREFACE  
TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS book appeals to the increasing body of readers who wish to get at the real Middle Ages; who, however impatient of mere dissertations and discussions, are glad to study genuine human documents, and to check the generalizations of historians by reference to first-hand facts. The Author has, therefore, attempted to compile a catena of such documents, each more or less complete in itself, but mostly too long for full quotation by historians. Moreover, he claims to cover a wider ground than most of the formal histories. The records here printed represent thirty years' study among all kinds of medieval writings, and could scarcely be outdone in this respect but by scholars who have better work to do. They have been chosen as specially characteristic of the period, and as appealing also to that deeper humanity which is common to all minds in all periods. They treat of clergy and laity, saints and sinners; spiritual experiences, love, battles, pageants, and occasionally the small things of everyday life. Drawn from six different languages, the large majority of these extracts are here translated for the first and perhaps the last time, since they are only the cream from bulky and often inaccessible volumes. A few are from manuscripts. If, on the whole, religious life is more fully represented here, and that life itself in its least conventional aspects, this want of strict proportion is more or less inherent in the plan of the work. We do not go abroad to meet Englishmen, or into the Middle Ages for the commonplace; though an occasional touch of this kind may help to show us the essential uniformity of little things in all ages. We most want to hear of those who, for good or evil, stand apart from the rest; and in the Middle Ages, as now, the evil generally lent itself best to picturesque description. The Author has, however, done all he can, consistently with any measure of historical truth, to avoid those darkest

sides of all upon which the scope of his *From St Francis to Dante* compelled him to dwell at some length.

Several of the best books, being easily accessible elsewhere, are omitted here. From one or two more, only just enough is given to indicate the value of the rest, already sufficiently translated. It was impossible, within any reasonable compass, to exploit the rich mine of Franciscan and Dominican records also; a small fraction of these have already been printed in *From St Francis to Dante*, and the rest are reserved for a later volume. With these necessary exceptions, it is hoped that the present selection may be in some real sense representative. How far it is from being exhaustive, those will know best who have read most widely. From such critics the Author can only claim indulgence for this first attempt in English to cover Medieval Life as a whole.

G. G. C.

40 MILL ROAD  
EASTBOURNE

May 1910

## PREFACE

### TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE original volume was felt by some readers to be rather bulky; here, therefore, it is divided into separately purchasable parts, arranged roughly according to subject. The first and largest deals with *Religion, Folk-Lore and Superstition*; the second, with *Chronicles, Science and Art*; the third, with *Men and Manners*; the fourth, with *Monks, Friars and Nuns*. The first is enlarged by the addition of three extracts which were not in the first edition, two of which refer to subjects of considerable recent interest, St Joan and the Inquisition. The fourth volume is considerably enlarged, especially by the inclusion of My Lord Abbot from *Petit Jean de Saintré*. I have been able to correct a few mistakes and add a few notes; otherwise, there has been little opportunity of bringing the book up to date. For the rearrangement of the extracts and the revision of the proofs, and much other help, I am indebted to my wife.

G. G. C.

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE  
CAMBRIDGE

Jan. 1928





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# RELIGION, FOLK-LORE, & SUPERSTITION



Ralph Glaber was put by his uncle to a monastic school, and took the vows in due course. His wandering and somewhat irregular life was partly spent in the Monastery of St Bénigne at Dijon (see Vol. IV), and seems to have ended at Cluny somewhere about 1044, at which date his Chronicle finishes. In spite of his crabbed style, he is one of the very few French chroniclers of the tenth and eleventh centuries who are worth reading: "it is, with the *Miracles de Saint-Benoit*, the most precious source we possess for manners and ideas in France at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th century" (G. Monod, in *Revue Historique*, t. XXVIII, p. 272). Certain exaggerated deductions drawn from him by modern writers, as to the overwhelming significance of the year A.D. 1000, have been corrected by Jules Roy in his admirable little monograph *L'An Mille* (Hachette 1885). It was not only at and about this date that our forefathers expected strange events: the medieval mind was perpetually haunted by the expectation of Antichrist, and even Sir Thomas More seems to have believed that the end of all things was at hand in his own days. The following extract is from Migne's edition (*P.L.* vol. 142, coll. 635 ff.).

## I. THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

WARNED by the prophecy of Holy Writ, we see clearer than daylight that in process of the Last Days, as love waxed cold and iniquity abounded among mankind, perilous times were at hand for men's souls. For by many assertions of the ancient fathers we are warned that, as covetousness stalks abroad, the religious Rules or Orders of the past have caught decay and corruption from that which should have raised them to growth and progress. . . . From this [covetousness] also proceed the constant tumult of quarrels at law, and frequent scandals arise, and the even tenour of the different Orders is rent by their transgressions. Thus also it cometh to pass that, while irreligiosity stalks abroad among the clergy, froward and incontinent appetites grow among the people, until lies and deceit and fraud and manslaughters, creeping abroad among them, draw almost all to perdition! And, since the mist of utter blindness hath darkened the eye of the Catholic Faith



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

(that is, the prelates of the Church), therefore their flocks, ignorant of the way to salvation, fall into the ruin of their own perdition. . . . For whensoever religion hath failed among the pontiffs, and strictness of the Rule hath decayed among the abbots, and therewith the vigour of monastic discipline hath grown cold, and by their example the rest of the people are become prevaricators of God's commandments, what then can we think but that the whole human race, root and branch, is sliding willingly down again into the gulf of primaeval chaos? . . . And because, in fulfilment (as we see) of the Apostle's prophecy, love waxeth cold and iniquity aboundeth among men that are lovers of their own selves, therefore these things aforesaid befel more frequently than usual in all parts of the world about the thousandth year after the birth of our Lord and Saviour.

For, in the seventh year before that date, Mount Vesuvius (which is also called Vulcan's Caldron) gaped far more often than his wont and belched forth a multitude of vast stones mingled with sulphurous flames which fell even to a distance of three miles around; and thus by the stench of his breath he began to make all the surrounding province uninhabitable. . . . It befel meanwhile that almost all the cities of Italy and Gaul were ravaged by flames of fire, and that the greater part even of the city of Rome was devoured by a conflagration. During which fire, the flames caught the beams of St Peter's church, beginning to creep under the bronze tiles and lick the carpenters' work. When this became known to the whole multitude that stood by, then, finding no possible device for averting this disaster, they turned with one accord and, crying with a terrible voice, hastened to the Confession<sup>1</sup> even of the Chief of the Apostles, crying upon him with curses that, if he watched not over his own, nor showed himself a very present defender of his church, many throughout the world would fall away from their profession of faith. Whereupon the devouring flames straightway left those beams of pine and died away. . . . At this same time a horrible plague raged among

<sup>1</sup> The part of the choir in which the celebrant makes his confession before saying mass. This was usually just in front of the altar steps. See Dom Martene, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus*, lib. 1, c. iv, art. 2, *ad fin.*

## THE MILLENNIUM

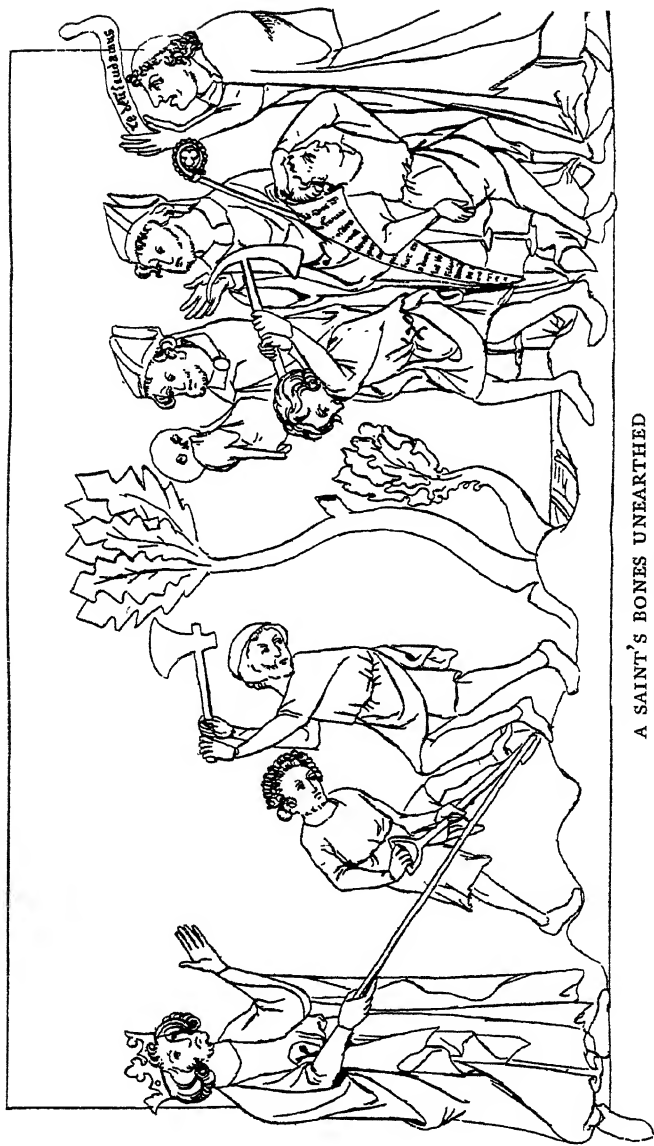
men, namely a hidden fire which, upon whatsoever limb it fastened, consumed it and severed it from the body.<sup>1</sup> Many were consumed even in the space of a single night by these devouring flames. . . . Moreover, about the same time, a most mighty famine raged for five years throughout the Roman world, so that no region could be heard of which was not hungerstricken for lack of bread, and many of the people were starved to death. In those days also, in many regions, the horrible famine compelled men to make their food not only of unclean beasts and creeping things, but even of men's, women's, and children's flesh, without regard even of kindred; for so fierce waxed this hunger that grown-up sons devoured their mothers, and mothers, forgetting their maternal love, ate their babes. [The chronicler then goes on to speak of two heresies which arose in France and Italy, of the piety of King Robert of France, etc., etc.]

So on the threshold of the aforesaid thousandth year, some two or three years after it, it befel almost throughout the world, but especially in Italy and Gaul, that the fabrics of churches were rebuilt, although many of these were still seemly and needed no such care; but every nation of Christendom rivalled with the other, which should worship in the seemliest buildings. So it was as though the very world had shaken herself and cast off her old age, and were clothing herself everywhere in a white garment of churches. Then indeed the faithful rebuilt and bettered almost all the cathedral churches, and other monasteries dedicated to divers saints, and smaller parish churches. . . . When therefore, as we have said, the whole world had been clad in new church buildings, then in the days following—that is, in the eighth year following the aforesaid thousandth after the Incarnation of our Saviour—the relics of very many saints, which had long lain hid, were revealed by divers proofs and testimonies; for these, as if to decorate this revival, revealed themselves by God's will to the eyes of the faithful, to whose minds also they brought much consolation. This revelation is known to have begun first in the city of Sens in Gaul, at the church of the blessed Stephen,

<sup>1</sup> St Anthony's fire, one of the curses of the Middle Ages, which modern medicine has traced to poisons generated in corrupt rye-bread.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

ruled in those days by the archbishop Leoteric, who there discovered certain marvellous relics of ancient holy things; for, among very many other things which lay hidden, he is said to have found a part of Moses' rod, at the report whereof all the faithful flocked together not only from the provinces of Gaul but even from well-nigh all Italy and from countries beyond the sea; and at the same time not a few sick folk returned thence whole and sound, by the intervention of the saints. But, as most frequently befalleth, from that source whence profit springeth to men, there they are wont to rush to their ruin by the vicious impulse of covetousness; for the aforesaid city having, as we have related, waxed most wealthy by reason of the people who resorted thither through the grace of piety, its inhabitants conceived an excessive insolence in return for so great benefits. . . . At that time, moreover, that is in the ninth year after the aforesaid thousandth anniversary, the church at Jerusalem which contained the sepulchre of our Lord and Saviour was utterly overthrown at the command of the prince of Babylon. . . . After that it had been overthrown, as we have said, then within a brief space it became fully evident that this great iniquity had been done by the wickedness of the Jews. When therefore this was spread abroad through the whole world, it was decreed by the common consent of Christian folk that all Jews should be utterly driven forth from their lands or cities. Thus they were held up to universal hatred and driven forth from the cities; some were slain with the sword or cut off by manifold kinds of death, and some even slew themselves in divers fashions; so that, after this well-deserved vengeance had been wreaked, scarce any were found in the Roman world. Then also the bishops published decrees forbidding all Christians to associate themselves with Jews in any matter whatsoever; and ordaining that, whosoever would be converted to baptismal grace and utterly eschew the customs or manners of the Jews, he alone should be received. Which indeed was done by very many of them for love of this present life, and impelled rather by fear of death than by the joys of the life everlasting; for all such of them as simulated this conversion returned impudently within a brief while to their former way of life. . . .



#### A SAINT'S BONES UNEARTHED

From MS. Cotton. Nero, D i, fol. 21b, representing the discovery of St Alban's bones in accordance with a divine revelation to King Offa II. The text illustrated is Matthew Paris, *Vita Offae Secundi*; the drawings in this MS. have often been attributed to the author's own hand, but are probably by another contemporary monk of St. Alban.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

After the manifold signs and prodigies which came to pass in the world, some earlier and some later, about the thousandth year from our Lord's birth, it is certain that there were many careful and sagacious men who foretold other prodigies as great when the thousandth year from His Passion should draw nigh. [Glaber here goes on to relate the rival claims of the Greek Church, the growth of heresy in Italy, the success of false miracles wrought by evil spirits, and another three years of famine and cannibalism; after which a series of church councils were held for peace and reform.] Then were innumerable sick folk healed in those conclaves of Holy men; and, lest men should think lightly of mere bursten skin or rent flesh in the straightening of arms and legs, much blood flowed forth also when the crooked limbs were restored; which gave faith to the rest who might have doubted. At this all were inflamed with such ardour that through the hands of their bishops they raised the pastoral staff to heaven, while themselves with outspread palms and with one voice cried to God: Peace, peace, peace! that this might be a sign of perpetual covenant for that which they had promised between themselves and God; on condition that, after the lapse of five years, the same covenant should marvellously be repeated by all men in the world in confirmation of that peace. That same year, moreover, so great was the plenty and abundance of corn and wine and other fruits of the earth, that men dared not hope to have so much during all the five years next to come; for no human food was aught accounted of save flesh or choice victuals, and this year was like unto the great Jubilee of ancient Mosaic times. Next year again, and again in the third and fourth years, the fruits were no less abundant. But, alas for shame! the human race, forgetful of God's lovingkindness and prone from its very beginning to evil, like the dog returning to his own vomit again or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, made the covenant of their own promise of none effect in many ways; and, as it is written, they waxed fat, and grew thick, and kicked. For even the princes of both orders, spiritual and secular, turned to covetousness and began to sin in theft and greed as grievously as before, or even worse. Then those of middle rank and the poorer people,

## THE MILLENNIUM

following the example of the greater, declined into horrible crime. For who ere now had heard of such incests, adulteries, and illicit alliances between close kindred, such mockery of concubines and such emulation of evil men? Moreover, to fill up the measure of so great wickedness, since there were few or none among the people to correct the rest, and to rebuke such crimes, therefore the prophecy was fulfilled which saith, "And it shall be as with the people, so with the priest"; seeing especially that all the rulers in those days, both secular and spiritual, were mere boys. For in those days, through the sins of the people, that saying of Solomon's was fulfilled: "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." For even the universal Pope of Rome himself, the nephew of the two popes Benedict and John who had preceded him, was a boy scarce ten years old, whose money and treasures had procured his election by the Romans; by whom in process of time he was dishonourably treated and oftentimes cast forth, so that he had no power.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as we have already said, the rest of the prelates in those days owed their promotion rather to their gold and silver than to their merit. Alas for shame! It is of such that the Scripture saith—nay, rather God's own mouth—"They have been princes, and I knew not." At this same time so innumerable a multitude began to flock from all parts of the world to the sepulchre of our Saviour at Jerusalem, as no man could before have expected; for the lower orders of people led the way, after whom came those of middle rank, and then all the greatest kings and counts and bishops; lastly (a thing which had never come to pass before), many noble ladies and poorer women journeyed thither. For many purposed and desired to die before they should see their homes again. . . . Moreover, some of those who were then most concerned in these matters, being consulted by many concerning the signification of this concourse to Jerusalem, greater than the past age had ever heard of, answered with some caution that it portended no other than the advent of that reprobate Antichrist, whose coming at the end of this world is prophesied in Holy Scripture.

<sup>1</sup> "The foulness of his conversation and life is horrible to relate," notes Glaber of the same Pope on a later page (698). This was the lowest ebb reached by the Papacy until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Nos. 2 and 3 are from the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* of John Colgan, an Ulsterman who became Professor of Theology at Louvain. "Colgan" (writes Henry Bradley in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*) "was an accomplished Irish scholar, and his large use of early documents in that language gives great importance to his work, which displays much critical sagacity." The lives are seldom exactly dated, but are mostly of great antiquity.

### 2. A MIRACLE OF ST SCOTHINUS

(*AA.SS. Hib.* vol. I, p. 10.)

WHEN therefore St Scothinus, by these and other severe chastisements, had purged himself from all molestations and imperfections of lustful desires, as though he followed after the purity of an angel here on earth, then began other corporeal creatures also to obey him and recognize him as an angel of God; wherefore he oftentimes walked dryshod over the sea, without help of boat. Once, while he thus walked on the sea to pass into Britain, he met with the ship that carried St Barry the Bishop; who, beholding and recognizing this man of God, enquired of him wherefore he thus walked on the sea. To whom Scothin answered that this was a flowery field whereon he walked; and presently, stretching his hand down to the water, he took from the midst of the ocean a handful of vermilion flowers which, in proof of his assertion, he cast into the Bishop's lap. The Bishop for his part, to maintain his own truth, drew a fish from the waters and cast it towards St Scothin; whereupon, magnifying God in His marvellous works, they departed with blessings one from the other.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. ANOTHER OF ST GERALD, ABBOT OF LISMORE

(*Ib.* p. 600.)

BEHOLD, a messenger came from the king with the news that his only daughter was even now dead: at which tidings the king, who had no son, was sore afraid. But presently, recovering, he said to his peers, "O counsellors of my bosom

<sup>1</sup> This same or a similar miracle, as Colgan notes, is told in the Life of St David concerning St Barry and St Brandan. The reader may find it in full on p. 428, § xviii.

## A MIRACLE OF ST GERALD

and faithful friends of my secret thoughts, let none of us reveal my daughter's death to these stranger saints; but let us say that mine only son is dead." And he added: "Unless they raise up to me a son instead of that daughter, I will cast them all into prison." When therefore the holy Abbot and his elder companions were brought into the royal presence, then said the king: "If ye would found in our domain an abbey rich in lands and goods, then beseech your God to raise up from the jaws of hell my son who is even now dead, the only hope of my kingdom; but if ye may not obtain this, then shall ye depart dishonoured from our realm, or remain as slaves among us." The holy men, hearing this, hastened to the chamber where the royal maiden lay dead; then the Abbot St Gerald turned to the corpse<sup>1</sup> and prayed: "O Eternal God, Who art the protector of all that trust in Thee, Who takest away the anguish of Thy faithful people, Who didst dry up the Red Sea for the captive Israelites and miraculously loose Peter from his bonds, have mercy and loose us also, who are prisoners to these barbarians, from this perilous pass into which we are come by the death of the King's daughter, insomuch as Thou mayest make of this dead maiden, by Thy marvellous power, a living youth, granting to him quick motion and sense through our ministry." After which prayer the king turned to him and said, "O man of God, saving thy reverence, it is my only son who is dead, and whom I beseech thee to vouchsafe to raise up." Then said St Gerald, "Be it son or daughter, may God Who giveth life to all, and to Whom all things are possible, vouchsafe to raise thee up a male child." Whereupon, making a sign of the cross, he poured water into the maiden's mouth from that stone which he ever carried with him from his mother's womb; and, to the amazement of all beholders, a royal youth arose forthwith from the bier; by which unwonted miracle their infidelity was scattered, and the faith of them that believed was made more strong. . . . Then the king and his dukes endowed this new son with thirty townships of land, together with all the appurtenances thereof.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text, by an obvious error, has "he turned to the King."

<sup>2</sup> Upon this the learned Father Colgan notes: "This tale of one sex changed into another may be thought of doubtful authenticity, since no such story is



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

*Acta Sanctorum Bolland.* Julii II (July 6th); Life of St Goar, possibly by a younger contemporary. The Saint, who died about A.D. 650, built himself a little hermitage, at which two legates of the Bishop of Trèves once chanced to attend a very early mass: after which, out of hospitality to them, their host ate and drank. They, at the Devil's instigation, and in the hope of extorting money from him, accused him of "eating or drinking intemperately in the early morning." St Goar, compelled to go with them to the Bishop, miraculously milked three wild does on the way to refresh his two persecutors.

### 4. ANOTHER OF ST GOAR

BEHOLD, the man of God entered into the palace where the Bishop sat; and looked about forthwith for a place where his disciple might stand, and where he might hang or hide his own cape. Seeing therefore, in a corner of the chamber, how a sunbeam slid through a little window, he or his servant took this for an oaken pole;<sup>1</sup> so that he hanged up his cape thereon and bade his attendant stand there. Which when Bishop Rusticus and his clergy saw, he said: "See ye now what he will do! This case is not of God; if it had been, he would not have eaten or drunken so early, for the saints of old entered through almsgiving and fasting into the kingdom of Heaven, and became friends of God. Now therefore I know not what this case may be. He eateth and drinketh at dawn, he milketh wild beasts, he hangeth his cape on a sunbeam. Let him come near and render account, whether he do this for God's sake or for the Devil's."

Then they enquired of the man of God, who answered and said: "God of all justice and might, Thou knowest that I nowise consent to the Devil's part, nor desire to consent; nor

recorded in the histories of Ireland concerning any son of a king or chief, and events so rare are rarely omitted by accurate historians. But, seeing that it is no easier for the Creator to change one shape into another (which, as we read, He hath oftentimes done) than to transmute one sex into another, I see no reason why this so clearly possible event should be thought altogether incredible. See Jocelin in the *Acts of St Patrick*, c. 84 and 85 and 150; St Eninu in the *Tripartite Life*, par. 2, c. 16, and our notes on those passages, where we have made many remarks concerning wondrous transformations. Moreover, in the Life of St Abban, which we shall print below under the 16th March, we read of a female child turned into a male."

<sup>1</sup> Clothes were mostly hung on such *perches*, even in Kings' chambers: see the accompanying illustration.

## A MIRACLE OF ST GOAR

know I that my cape hangeth on a sunbeam, for methought  
it was an oaken perch. Moreover, it was by no witchcraft that



### CLOTHES ON A PERCH

From a fifteenth-century French MS. in T. Wright's *Homes of other Days*, p. 158.

I milked those beasts; but God ordained them for me at that  
very hour, that He might show His marvels to these un-  
believing folk whom thou hast sent to me. In that I ate or

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drank at dawn, the Lord Who seeth all hearts knoweth that I did this not for gluttony but for charity's sake. [St Goar was triumphantly acquitted; and the same miracle is related of three later saints—St Aicaire, St Amable of Riom, and Pope Celestine V of the *Gran Rifuto*.]

The two following extracts are from Eadmer, the Saxon monk who became St Anselm's confidant and biographer. I give them here only because they are necessarily much abbreviated in Dean Church's delightful *St Anselm*. The first is from a description of Anselm's first visit to England in 1079, on which he stayed long with his friend and fellow-monk Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury. It was now that Eadmer first saw and heard the great man (*Vita S. Anselmi*, lib. I, c. v, § xlii).

### 5. AN ENGLISH SAINT RESCUED

MOREOVER Lanfranc was but a half-fledged Englishman, as it were, nor had he yet formed his mind to certain institutions which he had found here; whereof he changed many for excellent reasons, but others of his own will and authority. Since, therefore, he purposed to change them, and had now the company of his like-minded friend and brother Anselm, he said to him one day in more familiar converse: "These English, among whom we live, have set up certain saints to worship them; concerning whose merits, as related by their countryfolk themselves, I have sometimes pondered, and cannot resolve the doubts of their sanctity that arise in my mind. And, lo! here is one of them, laid to rest in this same holy See whereunto God hath called me, a good man indeed, and in his lifetime an archbishop here. Him they number not only among the saints but also among the martyrs, though they confess that he was slain not for confessing Christ's name but for refusing to ransom himself. For when (to tell it in their own words) his adversaries and God's enemies, the heathen, had taken him, and yet for reverence of his person had granted him leave to redeem himself, they demanded from him an immense ransom; and he, seeing that he could by no means collect such a sum without stripping his vassals of their money, and, perchance, bringing some under the hateful yoke of beggary, chose rather to lose his life than to keep it on such conditions.

## AN ENGLISH SAINT RESCUED

I would fain hear therefore, dear Brother, thy mind also on this matter." Thus did he, as a novice in English citizenship, briefly propose this question to Anselm. . . . But Anselm, as a prudent man, answered this prudent man simply according to the question proposed, saying: "It is manifest that he who feareth not to die rather than to commit even a light sin against God, would still less fear to meet death rather than to provoke God by a grievous sin. Now it would indeed seem a more grievous sin to deny Christ than that any earthly lord should somewhat oppress his subjects by taking away their money for his own ransom. But this Elphege refused to do the lesser evil; much more, then, would he have refused to deny Christ, if the furious band had constrained him thereunto by the threat of death. Wherefore we may understand that his soul was possessed with exceeding righteousness, when he chose rather to offer up his life than to violate charity and offend his neighbours. It is plain, then, that he was far from that woe which our Lord threateneth to him through whom the offence cometh; nor (as I think) is he undeservedly counted among the martyrs, since he is truly recorded to have borne death willingly for so high and righteous a cause. For even the blessed John Baptist, who is believed and worshipped by the whole church of God as one of the chief among the martyrs, was slain not for a matter of denying Christ, but for refusing to conceal the truth; and what matters it whether a man die for righteousness or for truth?" . . . To which Lanfranc answered, "I confess that I vehemently approve and revere the subtle perspicacity and the perspicacious subtlety of thy mind; and, taught by thy clear reasoning, I trust henceforward heartily to worship and venerate the Blessed Elphege as a truly great and glorious martyr of Christ, so help me God!" Which, indeed, he afterwards so devoutly performed, that he caused the life and passion of that saint to be diligently compiled. . . . and authorised and bade it to be read or sung in God's Church, whereby he did no little to glorify the martyr's name in this country.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It must be borne in mind that the canonization of saints was not formally reserved to the Holy See until A.D. 1170; before that time it lay at the diocesan's discretion.

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### 6. A CONFIRMATION SCENE

(*Ib.* lib. II, c. iv, § 38.)

ANSELM, therefore, set out from Wissant early on the morrow, and came after certain days to St Omer, where he was received with joy by clergy and monks, and detained for five days; during which time, at the prayer of the canons, he consecrated an altar. After which there came to him certain honourable men of those parts, kneeling at his feet and beseeching him to confirm their children by the laying on of hands and anointing with sacred oil. To whom he made answer forthwith: "Not only will I gladly receive those for whom ye pray in this matter, but others also who present themselves shall not be rejected." They, marvelling at the great man's benignity in so easy a condescension, were rejoiced above measure and gave him thanks; and, when their children had been confirmed, they forthwith filled the whole city with the words which they had received from his lips. Then might ye see men and women, great and small, pouring forth from their houses and outrunning each other in their haste to reach our lodging and share in so great a sacrament; for it was now many years since any bishop had suffered himself to be employed in any such office among them.<sup>1</sup> At last, on the sixth day, when he had already confirmed an innumerable multitude, and we were on the point of setting forth, and the long journey of this day compelled us to hasten, behold! a maiden came into the house as we were leaving it to mount our horses, and besought with lamentable affection of piety that she might be confirmed. Some of our companions, hearing this, were grievously troubled, and beat her down with contradictions, as folk who were already wearied with such matters. In short, though the holy man would have condescended to the maiden's prayers, yet these held him back and persuaded him to turn a deaf ear unto her, objecting the length of that day's journey,

<sup>1</sup> The medieval bishops had no settled times or places for confirming. It was usual for the people to try to catch them like this on their way through the district. It was frequently complained that many folk died thus unconfirmed. Archbishop Peckham complained in 1281 that there were "numberless people grown old in evil days who had not yet received the grace of confirmation." Compare also vol. II, no. 10.

## A CONFIRMATION SCENE

and the perils which commonly threaten travellers by night, especially in a strange country; and showing that very many stood at the door intent upon this same matter, ready to burst in if he granted this one request. But when he had gone a little forward, then the father bethought himself what reasons he had followed and what he had done; whereupon, accusing himself of grievous impiety, he was so cut to the heart with grief that, for all the rest of his life on earth (as he often confessed) repentance for that deed never departed from his mind.

Guibert de Nogent, from the first publication of his works in the seven-teenth century, has been known as one of the most interesting auto-biographers of the Middle Ages: his *Treatise on Relics* and *God's Dealings through the Franks [in the Holy Land]* are no less interesting. His style, especially in his *Own Life*, is involved and obscure, quite apart from corruptions of the text; but he was one of the most honest and learned writers in an age of great intellectual activity; and, though he took St Bernard's side against Abelard, he shows a critical acumen which can seldom be paralleled in any period of the Middle Ages. Born near Beauvais in 1053, of noble blood, he lost his father in childhood and his mother at the age of twelve by her retirement to a convent. His old master having at the same time become a monk, Guibert ran wild for a few years. At last, through his mother's and master's influence, he took the vows at St Germer, that magnificent abbey-church which may still be seen between Gournay and Beauvais. The regularity of his life and his fame as a student earned him the honourable position of Abbot at Nogent-sous-Coucy. After playing a conspicuous part in the church politics of 1106 and succeeding years, he retired again to the peace of his abbey, wrote several books of great value, and died between 1121 and 1124. More specimens of Guibert's work would be given here, but that his life and writings have quite lately been admirably treated in a monograph by a scholar of great promise whose early death has aroused much sympathy (Bernard Monod, *Le Moine Guibert*, Hachette, 1905). The present passage relates how Guibert's mother, anxious to fix his vocation, entered into a simoniacal bargain which was to thrust this boy of eleven into a rich canonry, and how the married canon who had been thus extruded regained his benefice by excommunicating the pious lady, should be read either in the original or in Mr Bland's translation (Routledge & Co.).

## 7. POPULAR CANONIZATION

(Guibert's *Treatise on Relics*, bk. 1, chap. i, col. 614.)

WHAT shall I say of those [saints] whose fame is supported by no shred of testimony from without, and who are rather

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darkened than illustrated by the fact that they are believed to be celebrated in certain worthless records? What shall I do in their case whose beginnings and middle life are apparent to no man, and whose latter end (wherein all their praise is sung) is utterly unknown? And who can pray for their intercession when he knoweth not whether they possess any merits before God? . . . I have indeed known some men possessed of a certain saint, as they called him, brought from Brittany, whom they long revered as a confessor; until, suddenly changing their minds, they celebrated him as a martyr. When I enquired closely into their reasons, they had nothing better to plead for this man's martyrdom than for his aforesaid confessorship. I call God to witness, that I have read—and read again in utter loathing to them that were with me—in the *Life of Samson*, a saint of great reputation in France and Brittany, concerning a certain abbot whom that book names St Pyro. When, however, I sought into the latter end of this man whom I held for a saint, I found his special mark of sanctity to be this: to wit, that he fell into a well while drunken with wine, and thus died. Nor have I forgotten the question propounded by Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, to his successor Anselm, then Abbot of Bec, concerning one of his predecessors who had been cast into prison, and was slain because he would not ransom himself. . . . Let the pontiffs therefore see to it, let the guardians of God's people see to it, and provide that, if the people have a zeal of God, they may at least have it according to knowledge, lest they sin by offering aright and not dividing aright.<sup>1</sup> If the prophet say truly, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil," then what perversity can be greater than to thrust men upon the sacred altars who perchance, in their lifetime, deserved to be thrust forth from the Church itself!

I have indeed seen, and blush to relate, how a common boy, nearly related to a certain most renowned abbot, and squire (it was said) to some knight, died in a village hard by Beauvais on Good Friday, two days before Easter. Then, for the sake of that sacred day whereon he had died, men began to impute

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Levit. i, 17, and ii, 6, with a play upon *divide*, which might also mean *discern*. See also St Bernard, *Epp.* 4, § 3 and 87, § 3.

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a gratuitous sanctity to the dead boy. When this had been rumoured among the country-folk, all agape for something new, then forthwith oblations and waxen tapers were brought to his tomb by the villagers of all that country round. What need of more words? A monument was built over him, the spot was hedged in with a stone building, and from the very confines of Brittany there came great companies of country-folk, though without admixture of the higher sort. That most wise abbot with his religious monks, seeing this, and being enticed by the multitude of gifts that were brought, suffered the fabrication of false miracles. Even though the covetous hearts of the vulgar herd may be impressed by feigned deafness, affected madness, fingers purposely cramped into the palm, and soles twisted up under men's thighs, what then doth the modest and wise man, who profeseth to aim at holiness, when he maketh himself the abettor of such things? Oftentimes we see these things made trite by vulgar gossip, and by the ridiculous carrying round of sacred shrines for the sake of collecting alms; and daily we see the very depths of some man's purse emptied by the lies of those men whom St Jerome calleth *rabulas* in mockery of their rabid eloquence; who shake us so with their rogueries, and bear us along with such religious flattery that (to quote that saintly Doctor again) they gobble more busily than parasites, gluttons, or dogs, and surpass ravens or magpies with their importunate chatter.

But why do I accuse the multitude, without citing specific examples to rebuke this error? A most famous church<sup>1</sup> sent its servants thus wandering abroad [with its shrine], and engaged a preacher to seek alms for repairing its loss. This man, after a long and exaggerated discourse on his relics, brought forth a little reliquary and said, in my presence, "Know ye that there is within this little vessel some of that very bread which our Lord pressed with His own teeth; and, if ye believe not, here is this great man"—this he said of me—

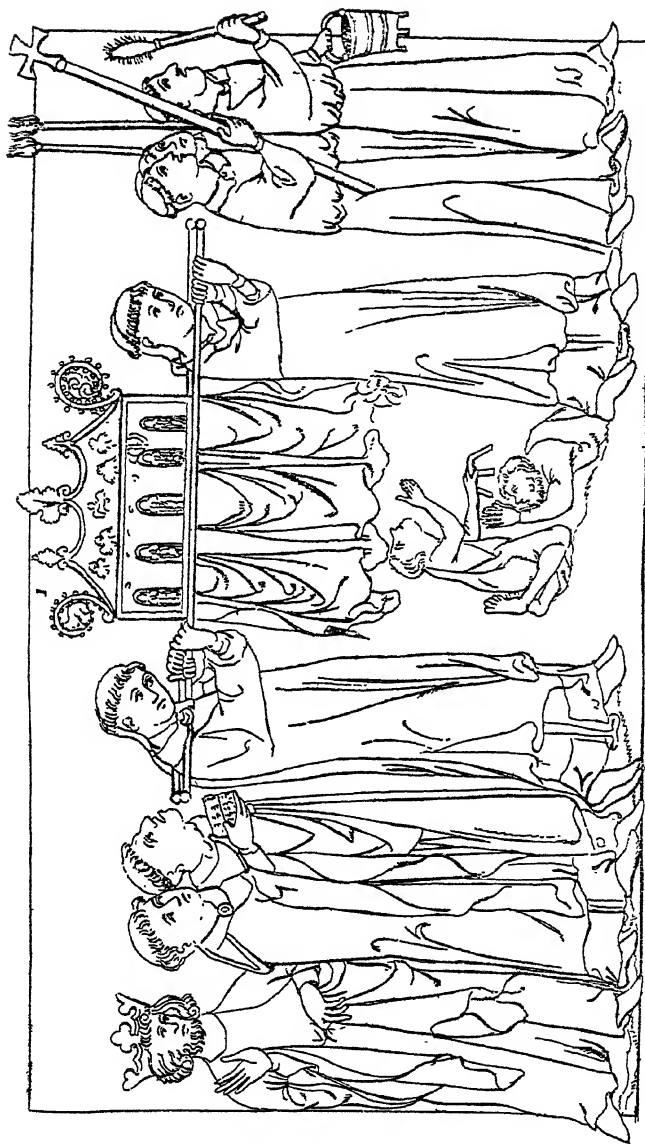
<sup>1</sup> Probably the Cathedral of Laon, which our author knew very well. It was burned down in 1112 and sent round its shrine to beg for help; cf. Guibert's autobiography, col. 938, and Herman's Book of Miracles performed on this tour, *ib.* col. 963. It is noteworthy that the large majority of the miracles there described belong precisely to the three classes which Guibert describes as most easily feigned.



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"here is this great man to whose renown in learning ye may bear witness, and who will rise from his place, if need be, to corroborate my words." I confess that I blushed for shame to hear this; and, but for my reverence of those persons who seemed to be his patrons, which compelled me to act after their wishes rather than his, I should have discovered the forger. What shall I say? Not even monks (not to speak of the secular clergy) refrain from such filthy gains, but they preach doctrines of heresy in matters of our faith, even in mine own hearing. For, as Boethius saith, "I should be rightly condemned for a madman if I should dispute with madmen." . . .

If, therefore, it be so doubtful a matter to judge of the claim to martyrdom, how shall we decide in the matter of confessors, whose end is often less certain? What though the common consent of the Church agree in the case of St Martin, St Remy, and such great saints, yet what shall I say of such as are daily sainted and set up in rivalry to them, by the common folk of our towns and villages?—Let them tell me how they can expect a man to be their patron saint concerning whom they know not even that which is to be known? For thou shalt find no record of him but his mere name. Yet, while the clergy hold their peace, old wives and herds of base wenches chant the lying legends of such patron saints at their looms and their broidering-frames; and, if a man refute their words, they will attack him in defence of these fables not only with words but even with their distaffs. Who but a sheer madman, therefore, would call on those to intercede for him concerning whom there is not the merest suspicion left in men's minds to tell what they once were? And what availeth that prayer wherein the petitioner himself speaketh in utter uncertainty of him whom he would make into his intercessor with God? How (I say) can that be profitable, which can never be without sin? For if thou prayest to a man whose sanctity thou knowest not, then thou sinnest in that very matter wherein thou shouldst have prayed for pardon; for though thou offerest aright thou dividest not aright. . . . But why should I labour this point at such length, when the whole Holy Church is so modest of mouth that she dareth not to affirm even the body



# THE SHRINE OF ST ALBAN CARRIED ABROAD

From a MS. of Matthew Paris (1260), figured in J. Strutt's *Manners, Customs, etc.*, pl. LXIV. In the original the monk carrying the host is chanting "This is in truth the master" / *MSS. N. 10. v. fol. 100. v.*

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

of the Lord's Mother to have been glorified by resurrection, for the reason that she cannot prove it by the necessary arguments!<sup>1</sup> If, therefore, we may not affirm this of her whose glory no creature can measure, what must we enjoin but eternal silence for those of whom we know not even whether they be saved or damned? Moreover, there be some things written concerning certain saints which are far worse than old wives' fables, and with which we ought not to pollute the ears even of swineherds. For indeed, since many attribute the highest antiquity to their patron saints, they demand in these modern times that their lives should be written: a request which hath oftentimes been preferred to me. Yet I may be deceived even in that which passeth under mine own eyes; how then can I tell the truth of those things which no man ever saw? Were I to say what I have heard said (and I have been besought also to speak the praises of such unknown saints—nay even to preach them to the people—) then I, who say what men ask of me, and they who have suggested it to me, would be alike worthy of a public reprimand.

But, omitting those whom their own authority proveth to be unauthorized, let us touch upon those others which are attended with certain faith. Even among these, error is infinite; or perchance one and the same saint is claimed by two different churches; for example, the clergy of Constantinople claim to possess the head of John Baptist, yet the monks of Angers maintain the same claim. What greater absurdity, therefore, can we preach concerning this man, than that both these bodies of clergy should assert him to have been two-headed? But a truce to jest, since we are certain that the head cannot be duplicated, and therefore that either these or those are under a grievous falsehood. If, however, in this matter, which is altogether associated with piety, they contend together with mutual arrogance and lies, then they worship not

<sup>1</sup> This question has never, in fact, been officially decided, though the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the favourite themes of mediæval art. "Melchior Canus sums up the general teaching of theologians on this head when he says: 'The denial of the Blessed Virgin's corporal assumption into heaven, though by no means contrary to the faith, is still so much opposed to the common agreement of the Church, that it would be a mark of insolent temerity.'" Arnold and Addis, *Catholic Dictionary*, s.v. *Assumption*.

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God but the Devil. Therefore, both the deceived and the deceivers worship wrongfully that very relic wherein they make their boast. If, however, they worship an unworthy object, it is evident how great must be the peril to which all the worshippers are exposed. Even though, not being John Baptist's head, it be that of some other saint, even then there is no small guilt of lying.<sup>1</sup>

But wherefore speak I of the Baptist's head, when I hear the same tale daily concerning innumerable saints' bodies? In truth my predecessor, the Bishop of Amiens, when he would have translated the body of St Firmin (as he thought) from the old shrine to a new, found there no shred of parchment—nay not even the testimony of a single letter—to prove who lay there. This I have heard with mine own ears from the Bishops of Arras and Amiens. Wherefore the Bishop wrote forthwith on a plate of lead, that it might be laid in the shrine; FIRMIN THE MARTYR, BISHOP OF AMIENS. Soon afterwards, the same thing was repeated at the monastery of St Denis. The abbot had prepared a more splendid shrine; when lo! in the ceremony of translation, while his head and bones were loosed from their wrappings, a slip of parchment was found within his nostrils, affirming him to be FIRMIN, BISHOP OF AMIENS. . . .

Hear now an illustration of our complaints, which may pass judgment on these instances aforesaid. Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, eagerly desired the body of St Exuperius, his predecessor, who was honoured with special worship in the town of Corbeil. He paid, therefore, the sum of one hundred pounds to the sacristan of the church which possessed these relics, that he might take them for himself. But the sacristan cunningly dug up the bones of a peasant named Exuperius and brought them to the Bishop. The Bishop, not content with his mere assertion, exacted from him an oath that these bones which he brought were those of Saint Exuperius. "I swear," replied the man, "that these are the bones of Exuperius: as to his sanctity I cannot swear, since many earn the title of saints who are far indeed from holiness." Thus the thief

<sup>1</sup> Amiens also claimed to possess the Baptist's head: but this tradition was apparently still without authority in Guibert's days.

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assuaged the Bishop's suspicions and set his mind at rest. But the townsfolk heard of the bargain which the custodian had made with their patron saint, and called him before them; whereupon he replied: "Search again the seals on his shrine; and, if ye find them not unbroken, let me pay the penalty!" See now what disgrace this Bishop's bargain brought upon religion, when the bones of this profane peasant Exuperius were thrust upon God's holy altar, which perchance will never more be purged of them. I can recall so many like deeds in all parts that I lack time and strength to tell them here; for fraudulent bargains are made, not so much in whole bodies as in limbs or portions of limbs, common bones being sold as relics of the saints. The men who do this are plainly such of whom St Paul speaketh, that they suppose gain to be godliness; for they make into a mere excrement of their money-bags the things which (if they but knew it) would tend to the salvation of their souls.

### 8. THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS

From Migne, *Pat. Lat.* vol. 185, col. 1144.

This is perhaps the earliest version of the now famous legend.

ALBEIT all who call themselves Christians are as it were naturally persuaded, by that Faith wherewith they have been imbued, that the sentence of excommunication is no less than a separation from God and an estrangement from eternal life; yet, for that hearts benumbed with negligence are sometimes more easily moved by examples than by preaching, I have thought it necessary to show how terrible is this peremptory sentence to a rational creature, when even a brute beast is thereby sometimes subjected either to death or to some most grievous calamity. . . . This monastery [of Corvey] in the time of the last Emperor Frederick [Barbarossa, d. 1190] was ruled by one Conrad, who, according to the pompous custom of prince-abbots, among other gauds of worldly glory, wore gold rings—in a spirit far different from that of the truly poor and humble-minded abbot-founder of Clairvaux, who (we find it written) delighted more in rake and hoe than in mitre and

## THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS

ring. Now it came to pass one day when he sat at meat and, in courtly fashion, had laid down a precious golden ring for the sake of washing his hands, that some trifle or some serious matter intervened, and the ring was left, somewhat too negligently, on the table. Meanwhile a tame raven, whom the abbot's courtiers kept as a pet, watching an unguarded moment, caught the ring in his beak and flew away swiftly to his nest without conscience of his own guilty theft. When, therefore, the feasters' hunger was satisfied, and the meats removed, and the guests arisen from the table, then the abbot learned his loss, blamed his servants' negligence, and bade them seek the ring forthwith in every corner: which, however, could nowhere be found, nor could the thief be discovered. Whereupon the abbot, suspecting both guests and servants, and stirred to fervent indignation, sent word to the parish priests of the great and wealthy town which was situated hard by the abbey and subjected to its rule, bidding them publicly launch the most grievous sentence of excommunication upon him who had not feared to defile himself with this crime. The sentence was proclaimed; and, as all rational beings in those parts found in their guiltless conscience a crown of innocence, so the irrational creature itself could not escape the temporal penalties of that curse, whereof the eternal pains could take no hold upon his fragile and shortlived condition. For this thief, guilty yet unaware of his own guilt, began to sicken little by little, to loathe his food, to cease more and more from his droll croakings and other irrational follies whereby he was wont to delight the minds of fools who neglect the fear of God; then he began even to droop his wings; and at last his very feathers fled from the corruption of his decaying flesh, exposing him as a miserable and marvellous spectacle to all beholders. It came to pass one day that, as the abbot's household disputed one with the other, in his presence, concerning this portentous change in the bird, and concluded that so great a marvel must have some cause, one of them said half in jest to the abbot: "Ye ought to consider, my lord, whether by chance this be the thief whom ye seek, and whether this loathsome plague which ye behold be not the token of that curse wherein he is involved." At which word all were astonished; and the abbot

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bade one of his servants straightway to climb the tree wherein this bird had his nest, and to turn over diligently his couch of straw and plaited twigs. The servant climbed, found the ring forthwith, cleansed it from the filth that disfigured it, and laid it within the abbot's hands, to the amazement of all that stood by. Wherefore, since the wretched thief, who suffered these horrible pains for his crime and yet had no guilty conscience thereof—when he, as we must believe, had been discovered by the finger of God, then the lord abbot, by the advice of prudent men, sent word to the priests who had pronounced this sentence of excommunication, to proclaim that the ring was now restored, and the curse of none effect. Whereupon, even as at first the aforesaid bird had sickened by slow degrees, and visibly languished from day to day under that insidious disease, even so he now began slowly to revive and to recover his former strength; until at last, by a plain miracle of God, he was wholly restored to his first health and beauty.

### 9. MONASTIC POVERTY

(*Ib.* col. 1345.)

ABRAHAM of blessed memory, formerly abbot of Prateae [near Bourges], of whom it is reported that he kept his virginity intact, by Christ's bountiful gift, until the day of his death, was a man of exceeding sanctity and unmatched meekness, and bare the Lord's yoke from his youth unto the end of his life. This man, being young both in age and in Religion, hid without permission in his pallet a small piece of new cloth wherewith to patch his frock. After a while he sought it and found it not, even though he turned his whole pallet over and over again; whereupon he withdrew abashed and, smitten with remorse of conscience, hastened to wipe out this stealthy theft in secret confession. But some time afterwards, as he stood alone in the kitchen washing the dishes, lo! this piece of cloth fell suddenly through the air and was placed in his hands as though some man had borne it to him. He recognized it forthwith and, looking around on all sides, seeing no man

## MONASTIC POVERTY

either up or down, he knew for a certainty that it had been stolen by some foul fiend who, after his confession, had been unable to keep it. Whereupon he became aware how perilous and terrible is even the least private possession to those who have professed a life of purity and perfect poverty: even as we read that a certain nun suffered the rebukes of the devil on her deathbed for the sake of a slender thread of silk which she had laid away without leave in her bed.

Now this good and pious man, for his exceeding purity of mind and body, was wont to receive many consolations from God and His saints, and especially from the blessed Mother of God, so that this same most holy Queen, coming sometimes in visions and telling him of things that should come to pass, after the most sweet words which she would speak unto him at such kindly visitations, would press upon his pure lips, with a scarce credible condescension, the most chaste kiss of her mouth. One night, however, he dreamed that he strove in disputation with certain faithless Jews concerning the Christian religion. When therefore they had long debated, suddenly so great a stench exhaled from those reprobates and infected his nostrils, that the bitterness of this most dismal odour awakened him. Yet, even when the sleep had left him, for many days afterwards he still smelt in his waking hours that same foul stench which had first assailed him in his dream. Nay, not only so, but even as often as any cause demanded that he should speak with Jews, or see them near him, or enter their houses, or pass by them, so often was he wont to smell that intolerable exhalation. Moreover, these things which we have even now related of the aforesaid man, we learned from his own mouth in private talk.

### 10. HUGH OF ST VICTOR'S PURGATORY

From the *Anecdotes Historiques* of Etienne de Bourbon, p. 223.

I HAVE read in a book of examples how Master Hugh of St Victor, after his death, appeared in grievous affliction to a certain holy man, beseeching his prayers and those of all good



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

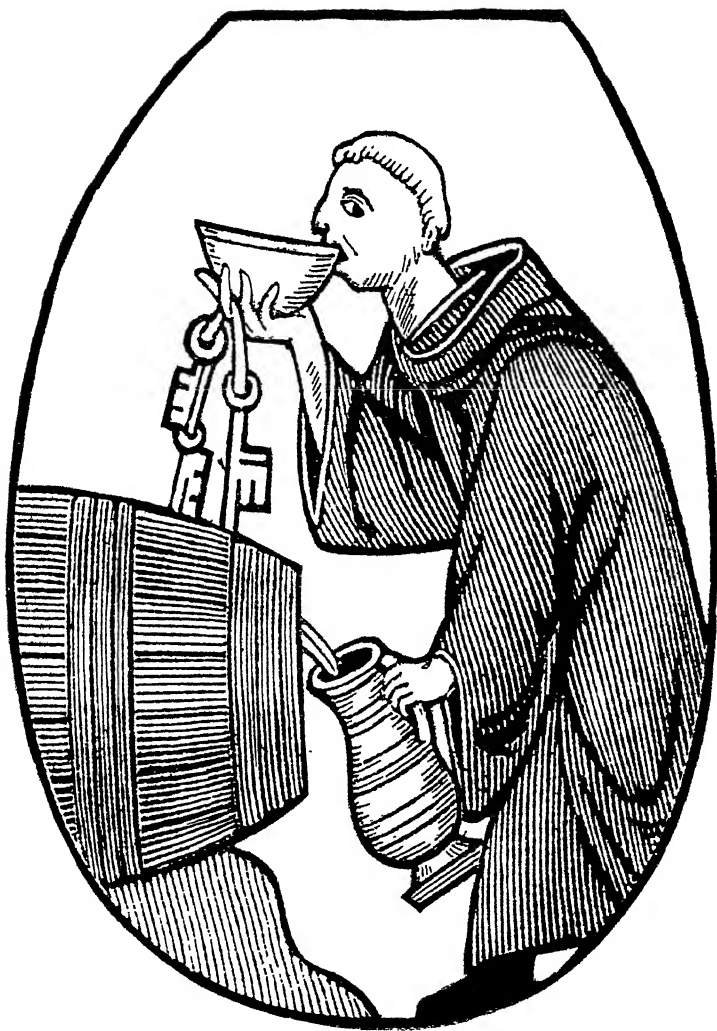
men. When therefore he enquired the reason of this affliction, Master Hugh answered that it was for his *zenedoxia*, and disappeared. And he, having enquired the sense of the word, found that it signified in the Greek tongue *Vainglory*.<sup>1</sup>

### II. THE CHANGELING MONK

From the Chronicle of John of Worcester (Oxford, 1908), p. 46, under the year 1138.

MEANWHILE the report of this following miracle was noised abroad. There is in the archbishopric of Trèves a certain noble monastery named Prüm, dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, and founded in ancient days by Pippin, King of the Franks, father to Charles the Great: from which monastery this strange and unheard-of event is reported by all that dwell therein. One morning, when the Cellarer of the monastery, followed by his servant, had entered his cellar to give out wine as usual for the sacrifice of the altar, he found one of the casks, which he had left full the day before, emptied even to the hole of that peg which men call *bung* or *spigot*, and the wine spilt over the whole pavement. Wherefore, groaning sore at this loss that had befallen, he rebuked the servant that stood by his side with many harsh words, saying that he had doubtless closed the spigot carelessly on the day before and thus caused this grievous damage: after which he commanded the man, under threat of punishment, to reveal this accident to no man; for he feared lest, if the Abbot should hear it, he would thrust him forth with contumely from his office. Again at nightfall, before the Brethren went to rest, he entered the cellar and closed with all diligence the spigots of the wine-casks; after which, locking the door, he sought his couch. Nevertheless on the morrow, when he entered his cellar according to custom, he found another cask emptied down to the bung-hole as on the day before, and the wine still flowing. Seeing which, and not knowing to whose negligence he might attribute this loss, he was cut to the heart and sore

<sup>1</sup> Like most Greek words in medieval Latin, this has suffered sad distortion; it ought to be *Kenodoxia*.



#### THE CELLARER AT WORK

From an illuminated initial of the early fourteenth century (MS. Sloane, 2435),  
reproduced in H. Shaw's *Dresses and Decorations*.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

amazed; and, again commanding his servant to breathe no word of what had happened, he fortified the spigots with all possible diligence, one by one, before seeking his couch that evening; after which he lay down sadly and anxiously to sleep. Having arisen at dawn and opened the cellar, he found the spigot drawn from a third cask, and the wine spilt even to the hole. Therefore, being stricken with terror, as well he might, at all these marvels, and no longer daring to conceal the common loss, he hastened to the Abbot and, falling at his feet, confessed all things in order, even as he had seen them. The Abbot therefore, having taken counsel with the Brethren, bade that all the spigots of the wine-casks should be anointed at nightfall with holy chrism; which was duly performed. The aforesaid Brother, therefore, having come to his cellar with the morrow's dawn, found a little black boy, wondrous small, clinging with his hands to one of the spigots: whom he seized forthwith and brought to the Abbot, saying, "Lo! lord, this little boy whom thou seest is he who hath brought upon us all that loss which we have suffered in our cellar"; and with this he told how he had found the urchin hanging to the spigot. Then the Abbot, marvelling beyond all belief at the figure of that child, took counsel and bade that a monk's frock should be made for him, and that he should be set to associate with the school-boys in the cloister. It was done as he bade; and this same child dwelt night and day with the school-boys. Yet he never took food nor drink, nor spake to any man, whether openly or in secret; and, while the rest slept at night-time or at mid-day, he would sit on his bed weeping and sobbing, without rest or intermission. Meanwhile another Abbot came to pray at this monastery, where he was detained for a few days; before whose face the school-boys often passed as he sat with the Abbot and the elder monks; at which times this little child, stretching out his hands to him, would look up with tearful eyes as though he besought some grace. After a while, seeing that he oftentimes did thus, the Abbot marvelled at his dwarfish stature and enquired of those that sat by, "Wherefore then will ye keep so small a child in your convent?" Whereat they smiled and answered, "Nay, my lord, this boy is not such as ye think"; and with that they told him of the

## THE CHANGELING MONK

damage which he had done unto them, and how he had been found hanging by the hands to the spigot of that cask, and how he had borne himself as he went in and out among them. At which that Abbot was sore afraid; and, groaning aloud: "As soon as may be," quoth he, "cast ye him forth from your monastery, lest ye incur greater loss or more grievous peril! This is manifestly some devil lurking in human form; nevertheless God's mercy hath protected you through the merits of the saints whose relics are here kept; so that he could not do you further hurt." So, at his command, the boy was forthwith brought into their presence; where, when stripped of his monkish frock, he vanished like smoke from between their hands.

### 12. HERETICAL PURITANISM

From the Chronicle of Ralph, Abbot of Coggeshall (R.S., pp. 121 ff.). Ralph's record is especially valuable during the years that came under his own experience (1187-1224).

IN the days of Louis [VII, 1137-1180], father to King Philip of France, while the errors of certain heretics, who are commonly called Publicans, spread secretly through many provinces of France, a marvellous thing befel in the city of Reims, in the matter of an old crone infested with this plague. The lord William, Archbishop of that city and uncle to King Philip, was riding one day for pastime without the city, attended by his clergy; when one of his clerks, Master Gervase of Tilbury,<sup>1</sup> seeing a maiden walking alone in a vineyard, and impelled by the wanton curiosity of youth, went aside to her, as we have heard from his own mouth in later years when he was a Canon. Having saluted her and asked whence she came, and who were her parents, and what she did there alone, having also observed her comeliness for a while, he began at last to address her in courtly fashion and prayed her of love *par amours*. "Nay," replied she, with a simple gesture

<sup>1</sup> "Gervase of Tilbury, an historian of the thirteenth century, whose career as a wandering scholar is very interesting, was for some time in the service of Otto IV, and was made Marshal of the Kingdom of Arles by him" (*Dict. of Eng. Hist.*).

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

and a certain gravity in her words, scarce deigning to look at the youth, "Nay, good youth, God forbid that I should ever be thy leman or any other man's; for if I were once thus defiled, and lost my virginity, I should doubtless suffer eternal damnation beyond all help." Hearing which, Master Gervase forthwith knew her for one of this most impious sect of Publicans,<sup>1</sup> who in those days were sought out on every hand and destroyed; more especially by Philip Count of Flanders, who by an act of righteous cruelty punished them without mercy; yet some had already come over to England, who were caught at Oxford, and ignominiously branded on the forehead with a white-hot iron at Henry II's bidding, and banished the realm. While therefore the clerk aforesaid disputed with the maiden, confuting this answer of hers, then the Archbishop came up with his train; and, hearing the cause of this dispute, he bade them take the girl and bring her with him to the city. Then, when he had addressed her in presence of his clergy, and proposed many texts and reasonable arguments to confute her error, she answered that she herself was not so well-instructed as to refute such weighty objections, but confessed that she had a mistress in the city who would easily refute all by her reasonings. When therefore she had revealed this woman's name and abode, the crone was forthwith sought out by the servants, and set before the Archbishop. She, therefore—being assaulted on all sides with texts from Holy Scripture, both by the Archbishop himself and by his clergy, that they might convince her of so heinous an error—yet she, by a certain sinister subtlety of interpretation, so perverted all the texts they cited, that all understood clearly enough how the Spirit of All Error spake through her mouth. For she replied so easily, with so ready a memory, to all the texts and stories objected to her, whether from the Old or the New Testament, as though she had acquired a knowledge of the whole Scriptures<sup>2</sup> and had been always practised in answers of

<sup>1</sup> Many sects of medieval heretics were accused, and in some cases probably with truth, of adopting the extreme Manichaean doctrine which condemned even marriage.

<sup>2</sup> It was a constant complaint of medieval preachers that the heretics knew the text of the Bible so much better than the average orthodox; see my *Medieval Studies*, no. vii, p. 10.

## HERETICAL PURITANISM

this kind; mingling falsehood with truth, and baffling the true explanation of our faith with a certain pernicious understanding. Since therefore the obstinate minds of both women could be recalled neither by fair words nor foul, nor by any citations or texts of Scripture, from the error of their ways, therefore they were shut up in his prison until the morrow. On the next day they were summoned again to the Archbishop's hall, before him and all his clergy, and in the presence of noble men; where they were again publicly challenged to renounce their errors, and many reasons were again alleged. Yet they would by no means admit his salutary warnings, but rather persisted immovably in the errors they had conceived; wherefore they were unanimously adjudged to the stake. When therefore the fire was already kindled in the city, and they should have been dragged by the serjeants to the penalty to which they had been condemned, then that wicked mistress of error cried aloud: "O madmen and unjust judges! Think ye to burn me now with your fires? I fear not your doom, nor shudder at the flames ye have prepared." With these words, she suddenly drew from her bosom a spool of thread, which she cast through a great window of the hall, yet keeping the clue in her hand, and crying with a loud voice in all men's hearing: "Catch!" No sooner had she spoken this word, than she was caught up from the ground, and followed the ball like a bird through the window, under all men's eyes: for, as we believe, those same evil spirits bore her away who of old lifted Simon Magus into the air.<sup>1</sup> But what became of that witch, or whither she was spirited away, no man of that company could discover. Meanwhile the maiden, who had not yet come to such a pitch of madness in that sect, remained behind. No persuasion of reason, no promise of riches, could recall her from her foolish obstinacy; wherefore she was burned to death, to the admiration of many who marked how she uttered no sighs, no tears, no laments, but bore with

<sup>1</sup> For this legend see Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.* lib. ix, c. 12, and the *Golden Legend* (Temple Classics, vol. iv, p. 15): "Then said Simon: it is not as thou sayest, but I shall show to thee the power of my dignity, that anon thou shalt adore me; I am first truth, and may flee by the air; I can make new trees and turn stones into bread; endure in the fire without hurting; and all that I will I may do. So Peter disputed against all these, and disclosed all his malefices."

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

constancy and cheerfulness all torments of the consuming flames, even as the martyrs of Christ (yet for how different a cause!) who were slain in old times by the heathen in defence of the Christian religion.<sup>1</sup>

### 13. A PRECIOUS WINDFALL

From the contemporary *Life*, written by a disciple of St William, canon of Ste-Geneviève at Paris, and afterwards abbot of Eskilsoe in Sweden and of St-Thomas-du-Paraclet. It will be found in *AA.SS. Boll.* April 6th (vol. 1, p. 633, § 58).

WHILE Abbot William was yet in this corruptible body, weighed down with old age, two teeth were torn from his head, which he committed to Brother Saxo, saying: "Keep these two teeth in thy charge, and see that thou lose them not." He did as the Abbot had required him, pondering in his own mind wherefore this command had been laid upon him. When however the Lord had taken him away from before our face, then his surviving disciples, in memory of so holy a Father, besought that somewhat might be given to them of his possessions or of his garments; among whom one Brice, the Sacrist, complained that naught had fallen to his share saving a fur cap which the Saint had been wont to wear on his head. To which complaints this Brother made answer to whom these teeth had been entrusted: "I will give thee

<sup>1</sup> That incidents of this kind were not infrequent, we may gather from the learned and orthodox Petrus Cantor (*Verbum Abbreviatum*, Migne, *Pat. Lat.* vol. 205, p. 230). After complaining that the Church of his time dealt more harshly with heretics than the pagans had dealt with the early Christians, he goes on, "Moreover, certain honest matrons, refusing to consent to the lasciviousness of priests 'of the seed of Canaan' [Daniel xiii, 56 *Vulg.*] have been written by such priests in the book of death, and accused as heretics, and even condemned by a certain notoriously foolish zealot for the Christian faith, while rich heretics were simply blackmailed and suffered to depart. One man, because he was poor and pallid, though he faithfully confessed the faith of Christ on all points, and sheltered himself under the hope thereof, yet was burned because he said to the assembled bishops he would by no means submit to the ordeal of red-hot iron unless they could first show him that he could do so without mortal sin and without tempting God. Hearing this, they abandoned him with one accord [to the secular arm], telling the king that it was not lawful for them to be present at a judgment which involved the shedding of blood."

## A PRECIOUS WINDFALL

no small gift—nay, a mighty one, a pearl of price, no less than a tooth of our Father who in his lifetime loved thee not only with a special love, but thee above all others.” With these words he delivered to him the tooth; and the Sacrist, rendering manifold thanks for this grace conferred upon him, took the tooth and held it in that dear veneration which it deserved. Oh what gifts did God afterwards confer upon mortal men through that tooth!—gifts which, if they were written down, man’s weak intellect would never be content to believe!

### 14. A BATCH OF SUPERSTITIONS

Superstitions condemned in the *Poenitential* of Bartholomew Iscanus, Bishop of Exeter, 1161–1186. (MS. Cotton. Faust. A. viii, fol. 32, printed in *Rel. Ant.* 1, 285.)

(i) WHOSOEVER shall strive to take away from another, and gain for himself, by any incantation or witchcraft, another’s plenty of milk or honey or of other things; (ii) Whosoever, ensnared by the Devil’s wiles, may believe and profess that they ride with countless multitudes of others in the train of her whom the foolish vulgar call Herodias or Diana, and that they obey her behests; (iii) Whosoever has prepared a table with three knives for the service of the fairies, that they may predestinate good to such as are born in the house; (iv) Whosoever shall have made a vow by a tree or water, or anything save a church; (v) Whosoever shall pollute New Year’s Day by magic enquiries into the future, after the pagan fashion, or who begin their works on that day, that they may prosper better than in any other year; (vi) Whosoever make knots or sorceries and divers enchantments by charms of witchcraft, and hide them in the grass or in a tree or in a branching road, in order to free their beasts from murrain; (vii) Whosoever shall have set his child on the house-roof or in an oven [or *furnace*] to recover its health,<sup>1</sup> or for the same purpose shall

<sup>1</sup> “Ellen Cushion and Anastatia Rourkes were arrested at Clonmel on Saturday, charged with cruelly illtreating a child, three years old, named Philip Dillon. The prisoners were taken before the Mayor, when evidence was given showing an



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have used charms or characters or anything fashioned for divination, or any artifice whatsoever save only godly prayers or the liberal art of medicine; (viii) Whosoever, while gathering medicinal simples, shall have said any charm save such as are godly, as the Lord's Prayer or the Creed or suchlike; (ix) Whosoever, labouring in wool or dyeing or other works, shall use charms or lay spells thereon that they may prosper; or who shall forbid the carrying away of fire or aught else from his house, lest the young of his beasts perish; (x) Whosoever shall work witchcraft from a dead man's funeral or corpse or garments, lest the dead folk take some vengeance, or lest some other die in that same house, or to obtain thereby some other profit or well-being; (xi) Whosoever on St John's Day shall have wrought any witchcraft to foretell the future; (xii) Whosoever shall believe that good or evil comes to him from the croak of a jackdaw or raven, or from meeting a priest or any animal whatsoever; (xiii) Whosoever shall cast into his barn or his cellar a bow, or any other plaything soever wherewith the devils called fairies should play, that they may bring the greater plenty; (xiv) Whosoever, in visiting the sick, shall conceive any omen of good or evil from the motion of any stone on his outward or homeward way, or by any other sign whatsoever; (xv) Whosoever shall believe that a man or woman may be changed into the shape of a wolf or other beast; (xvi) Whosoever shall spy out the footsteps of Christian folk, believing that they may be bewitched by cutting away the turf whereon they have trodden;<sup>1</sup> (xvii) (From the Council

extraordinary survival of superstitious belief. It appears that the neighbours fancied that the child, which had not the use of its limbs, was a changeling, left by the fairies in exchange for the original child, while the mother was absent. Prisoners entered her house and placed the child, naked, on the hot shovel, under the impression that this would 'break the charm.' The poor little thing was severely burnt, and is in a precarious condition. Prisoners, who were hooted by an indignant crowd, were remanded" (*Lynn News*, 24 May, 1884). Etienne de Bourbon, as will presently be seen (Extract 54 below), tells a similar tale from his own experience.

<sup>1</sup> A correspondent contributes an admirable analogy to *Notes and Queries* (17 September 1910). It is quoted from p. 245 of the *Report of the S.P.G.* for 1910. "A girl, because of a rival of her own sex, in the case of a man paying his affection to the latter, was told by her mother to gather up the 'track' of her feet—i.e. by taking up the sand on which she had walked—and putting this in a cloth to place it over the fire, when by burning the rival will in turn shrivel up, and so meet her death."

## A BATCH OF SUPERSTITIONS

of Agde.) The priest must enquire whether there be any woman who professeth to be able to change men's minds by sorcery and enchantments, as from hate to love or from love to hate, or to bewitch or steal men's goods: also whether there be any professing to ride on certain nights and upon certain beasts with a host of demons in women's shape, and to be enrolled in the company of such. Let any woman of this sort be chastised with birchen twigs and cast forth from the parish.

### 15. THE PRIEST OF EVIL OMEN

From Cardinal Jacques de Vitry's *Exempla*, ed. Crane, p. 112: T. Wright, *Latin Stories*, p. 77.

IN certain districts I have seen men when they meet priests [the first thing in the morning] forthwith crossing themselves, saying that it is an evil omen to meet a priest. Moreover, I have heard on sure authority that in a certain town of France wherein many of all conditions died, men said among themselves, "This deadly plague can never cease unless, before we lay a dead man in his grave, we shall first cast our own parson into the same pit!" Whence it came to pass that, when the priest came to the edge of the grave to bury a dead parishioner, then the countryfolk, men and women together, seized him, arrayed as he was in his priestly vestments, and cast him into the pit. These are inventions of the devil and demoniacal illusions.

### 16. SUPERSTITION PUNISHED

T. Wright, *Latin Stories*, p. 110.

HERE is an example of a woman who used to make the sign of the Cross, as it is said, when she met her priest in the morning, and who answered that she did this lest some mishap should betide her that day. Whereunto he said: "Dost thou believe that it will be the worse to thee for having met me?" And she replied: "I fear it." Then said he: "It shall indeed be to thee as thou hast believed; for thou shalt have *one* mishap

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

because thou hast met me." And, seizing her by the shoulders, he cast her into a muddy ditch, saying: "Be it unto thee even as thou hast believed!"

In Germany the same superstition was attacked in the thirteenth century by the Franciscan Berthold of Regensburg (ed. Pfeiffer, vol. 1, p. 264): "Thus some folk believe in unlucky meetings, and that a wolf is lucky to fall in with—a wolf, that doth evil to all the world, and is so unclean a beast that he stinketh in men's nostrils and no man may thrive within scent of him!—and again they believe that an anointed priest is unlucky to meet; yet all our faith lieth on the priest, and God hath exalted him above all men!"

Petrus Cantor, "Peter the Precentor," was also Rector for many years of the Cathedral School at Paris—*i.e.*, of perhaps the busiest centre of learning in Europe. In 1191 he was chosen Bishop of Tournay; but the election was contested, and he willingly withdrew his claim; soon afterwards he entered a Cistercian monastery, and died in 1197. Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, who had known him personally, described him as "a lily among thorns, or a rose among thistles.... A man mighty in word and in deed... whose uprightness of life added weight and gravity to his doctrine." The following extract is from his *Verbum Abbreviatum* (Migne, *Pat. Lat.* vol. 205).

### 17. MASSES AND MONEY

(Cap. xxvi, col. 97.)

LIKEWISE I say that temporal things should not be set among spiritual things in order that men may perform these latter, or at least perform them more promptly and swiftly. . . . To this purpose is that detestable example of the clergy who, playing at dice, fled in a disorderly and indecent fashion to vespers when they heard that there would be vesper-money for singing that service, and that it would be distributed beforehand in the church.<sup>1</sup> Another example is that of the prelate who besought the choir of his church to make St Stephen's day a feast of double solemnity in silken vestments

<sup>1</sup> To ensure regularity of attendance on the part of ministers at the great cathedral and collegiate churches, the authorities paid a considerable part of their salaries in ready money, handed over each time in the vestry to such only as had attended that particular service. See vol. iv for those who waited about the church for their "distributions" without properly celebrating the service.

## MASSES AND MONEY

and ecclesiastical chants, but who could only obtain it by promising to his clergy an annual feast, and by doubling the payment for matins that night; so that they thus rather celebrated the Feast of the Double Money than the Feast of St Stephen. . . . When the bell rang for the hour of distribution at a certain church, and a bar was set across the entrance to the choir, the clergy ran as though to a solemn feast, even as old women run for the greased pig;<sup>1</sup> some stooping below to enter, others jumping over the bar, and others rushing in disorderly fashion through the great portal, whereby it is lawful for no man to enter save only for the dignitaries of the church. By reason of which baseness of filthy lucre, a certain layman besought one of the clergy not to attend at that service, for very shame's sake. But what could he do? If he entered into the choir, he would risk the suspicion of covetousness among the laity; if not, the clergy would suspect him of pride. . . . What can be more despicable than that the laity should call two of the services in a certain church, the *Lord's Hours*, for the singing of which there is no certain payment, and the rest the *Penny Hours*, nay, rather the Devil's hours? . . . In short, even as it was honourable and laudable, before the ordinance of this miserable bargain, to enter the choir and perform divine service assiduously, so it is now dishonourable and of evil report, since this assiduity bringeth us rather the repute of covetousness than of devotion: so that now, in the words of the poet, "the Church (a name once noble and venerable) is prostituted, and sits like a harlot gaping for gain."

If this venality, the leprosy of Gehazi and the simony of the Magus, is so foul and damnable in the mere appendages to the Sacraments, as we have said above, then how much more so in the very substances of the Sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist?<sup>2</sup> . . . What, pray, is the cause why the other church services remain in the simplicity and purity of their first institution, and are never doubled, and this alone [of the Mass] is doubled, contrary to its first institution? Certainly

<sup>1</sup> *Tanquam vetulae ad unctum*. See Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes*, bk. iv, chap. iii, § xxxi, and Ed. Derembourg, *Vie d'Ousâma*, Paris 1889, p. 479.

<sup>2</sup> It was at this time still illegal to demand any fixed sum for saying mass: voluntary offerings might be accepted, but no fixed charge was allowed.

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the cause is in the offerings: for at the Mass we offer and at no other service. . . . And, sad to relate, from such offerings altars are erected, sanctuaries are adorned, and monasteries built, by monks who thus abuse the Apostle's precept, "asking no questions for conscience' sake": though the Apostle speaketh only to such as sometimes ate with idolaters, that they might preach unto them. Moreover, we sell Christ more shamefully than Judas did; for we are worse than he. He, when his family was in need, sold one whom he believed to be a mere man; but we, Him Whom we know to be God and Man. He for thirty pieces of silver, and we for the vile price of a penny. He again, repenting (though with no true repentance), brought back the thirty pieces and cast them from him; but there is none among us in the Church who casteth away such ill-gotten gains. Moreover his thirty pieces, being the price of blood, were not put into the treasury: but nowadays from base oblations and ill-gotten gains altars are raised, churches and suchlike buildings are made. . . . Moreover (I say it even weeping), this sacrament alone is turned by some to magic arts, men celebrating masses over images of wax as a curse upon others; nay even, for such a curse, they sing the Mass of the faithful ten times or more, that their enemy may die by the third day or at least within a brief while afterwards, and may be laid with the dead in the grave. Some, again, have invented a Mass for the slaughter of those lately slain round about Jerusalem, as of newly-made martyrs: by which Mass they think to entice to themselves the greater oblations, by reason of the favour that men bear to such men slain [on the crusades]. To expel this many-headed disease from the Church I see but this one remedy; to wit, that there should be few churches, few altars therein, few and picked men to be ordained, and even those already ordained to be sifted before admission: above all, the strictest choice of such as are set over the lesser priests: and the extreme remedy, deliberated by Pope Gregory VIII, would be the abolishment of all oblations save thrice a year, namely at Christmas, Whitsuntide, and Easter, and on the Feast of the church's patron saint, and in presence of a dead body, and on any anniversary day. See how there was in all Israel only one temple, one tabernacle,

## MASSES AND MONEY

one altar of offerings in the open court of the temple! for there was indeed in the Holy Place an altar of incense, yet naught was offered thereon save a little frankincense. Of this multitude of altars Hosea spake in detestation, saying, "because my people hath made many altars to sin, altars are become to him unto a sin: they shall offer victims, and the Lord will not receive them." Wherefore, after the example of this one temple, we should have a single church in each city—or, in a populous city, a few churches, yet all subject to one greater church. For the multitude of chapels hath begotten unlawful ministries, with many other portentous and strange things.

Ralph Higden, a monk of Chester, died in 1364. His *Polychronicon* is not only a digest of such chronicles as the author could get hold of, but also a popular encyclopaedia: it has no original merit, but is most valuable as showing a learned man's outlook on the world during Chaucer's boyhood. The book was translated in 1367 by John Trevisa, chaplain to Lord Berkeley, and is printed in the Rolls Series.

### 18. ANCESTRY OF HENRY II

(R.S. vol. viii, p. 31.)

FOR that every man that readeth in book should have the less wonder of the ungracious issue and end of this king and of his sons, we shall take heed of this king's beginning, and whereof he came both on father's side and mother's side. Also of the condition of his wife, by whom he gat his sons. Geoffrey Plantagenet came of the children of a countess of Anjou, that was espoused only for fairness of body. She would seldom come to church, and then unneth<sup>1</sup> she would abide the secrets of the mass. The earl her husband took her, and was ware of that doing, and ordained four knights to hold her in church; and she threw away her mantle that she was y-holden by, and left there her two sons under her right side of her mantle, and with her other two sons that she had under the left side of her mantle she flew out at the window of the church in sight of all men, and was never y-seen after that time. Afterward

<sup>1</sup> Scarcely.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Richard king of England told oft this tale, and said that it was no wonder though they that cometh of such a kindred grieved each other, as they that come of the devil and should go to the devil. Also in a time king Henry sent a clerk to his son Godfrey earl of Brittany, for to reform and make full peace, and the son answered the clerk in this manner: "Why art thou come to disinherit me of my right of my kind birth? knowest thou nought that it belongeth to us properly by kind,<sup>1</sup> and it is y-pight<sup>2</sup> upon us by kind of our forefathers, that none of us should love other? Then travail thou nought in vain to put away kind." Also this king Henry's mother was y-wedded to this Geoffrey, leaving her earlier husband, that was a pilgrim and lived as a hermit, and this king Henry came of them twain in his latter marriage. Also of this Henry, while he was a child y-nourished in the king's court of France, saint Bernard the abbot prophesied and said in presence of the king: "Of the devil he came, and to the devil he shall"; and meant thereby both the tyranny of his father Geoffrey that gelded the bishop of Seez, and his own cruelty that slew St Thomas of Canterbury.<sup>3</sup>

### 19. THE JEW CONVERTED

(R.S. vol. viii, p. 247.)

At Toledo in Spain a Jew digged in his orchard to make him a vineyard; there he found a stone whole and sound in every side. In the middle of that stone he found a book, as great as a psalter with treen<sup>4</sup> leaves, written in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and spake of the three worlds from Adam to Antichrist, and declared the property of men, and set the beginning of the third world in Christ in this manner: "In the third world God's Son shall be born of a maid Mary, and He shall suffer the death for salvation of mankind." The Jew read this and was baptized anon. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Nature.

<sup>2</sup> Fixed, fastened.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. lxix, note 15.

<sup>4</sup> Wooden (tree-en.)

## MEDICINE AND MAGIC

Burchard, Bishop of Worms, writing about A.D. 1020, condemned all who observe certain rites, or make certain incantations, "in the gathering of medicinal herbs; save only with the Creed and the Paternoster, in honour of God and our Lord" (*Decretum*, lib. x, c. 20; cf. c. 43). We remember, however, that Chaucer's Doctor of Physic worked by astrology, and that "his study was but little on the Bible." The fact is that some sort of ceremonial was generally considered a necessary part of all medieval medicine; and that, while one patient would sing Psalm xvi, drink his draught out of a church bell, and get a priest to say a prayer over him at the conclusion, others, again, had greater faith in the frankly pagan leechcrafts which still survived. A twelfth-century medical treatise in the British Museum (MS. Harl. 1585, fol. 12a ff.) gives the following two incantations. One of the two illuminations which accompany it in the MS. is reproduced in *Social England*, illustrated edition, vol. II, p. 118.

### 20. MEDICINE AND MAGIC

HOLY Goddess Earth, parent of Nature, who dost generate all things, and regenerate the planet which thou alone showest to the folk upon earth: Thou guardian of heaven and sea, and arbiter of all the gods, by whose influence Nature is wrapt in silence and slumber, thou art she who restorest day and putteth the darkness to flight, who governest the shades of night in all security, restraining at thy will the mighty chaos, winds and rain and storms, or again letting them loose. Thou churnest the deep to foam, and putteth the sun to flight, and arousest the tempests; or again at thy pleasure thou sendest forth the glad daylight. Thou givest us food in safety by a perpetual covenant; and, when our soul fleeth away, it is in thy bosom that we find our haven of rest. Thou too art called, by the loving-kindness of the gods, the Great Mother, who hast conquered the god of mighty name. Thou art the force of the nations and the mother of the gods, without whom nothing can be born or come to maturity. Mighty art thou, Queen of the Gods! thee, O Goddess, I adore in thy godhead, and on thy name do I call; vouchsafe now to fulfil my prayer, and I will give thee thanks, O Goddess, with the faith that thou hast deserved. Hear, I beseech thee, and favour my prayers; vouchsafe to me, O Goddess, that for which I now pray to thee; grant freely to all nations upon earth all herbs that thy majesty bringeth to life, and suffer me thus to gather this thy medicine. Come to me with thy healing powers;



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

grant a favourable issue to whatsoever I shall make from these herbs, and may those thrive to whom I shall administer the same. Prosper thou all thy gifts to us, for to thee all things return. Let men take these herbs rightly at my hand; I beseech thee now, O Goddess, may thy gifts make them whole; suppliant I beseech thee that thy majesty may vouchsafe me this boon.

The next incantation, fol. 13 b, is addressed to the herbs themselves.

Now, all herbs of might, I beseech you and supplicate your majesty; ye whom our Mother Earth hath brought forth and given as a gift to all nations, upon whom she hath conferred the gift of healing, and majesty in the sight of all men; be ye now a help and a profit to me. This I pray and beseech, with all supplication, be ye here present with all your virtues, (for she who hath created you hath given me leave to pluck you now, with his favour to whom the gift of healing hath been vouchsafed); and, so far as your virtues may extend, give ye healing and a good case and the grace of health. I beseech you grant me now by your virtue that whatsoever I distil from you may work with all power to a speedy effect and a happy issue. Grant that I may ever be permitted, by the favour of your majesty, to pluck you and to gather fruit in striving for you: grant this, and I will give you thanks in the name of the majesty which hath brought you to life.

Extracts 21-24 are from the so-called *Revelation to a Monk of Evesham*, first printed in English in 1483, and reprinted by Prof. Arber. *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (vol. II, p. 318) has an account of this beautiful book, which is not only very scanty but very incorrect: the true facts are to be found in Mr H. L. D. Ward's article on pp. 421 ff. of the *Journal of the Archaeological Association* for 1875. The monk was really of Eynsham near Oxford, and his vision was written in Latin by Adam, subprior of that monastery, who was then chaplain to St Hugh of Lincoln. This same Adam wrote in later years the beautiful *Life of St Hugh*, which has been published in the Rolls Series, and to which Froude devoted one of his *Short Studies*. A monk named Edmund, who had long been ailing, fell into a trance on the night before Good Friday, and awoke from it only with the sound of the Easter bells. He then told to those who stood by his bedside all that he had seen in Purgatory and Paradise; like Dante, he saw many great men known to him only by name, and many obscure folk whom he himself had known in life. The first passage here describes

## A SAINT IN NEED

the death of a goldsmith with whom the monk had once been intimate. The spelling of the Old English version has here been modernized, and a few words altered.

### 21. A SAINT IN NEED

(p. 48.)

MY dear friend, (he said,) all ye together in the world hold me as lost and damned, not knowing the goodness and mercy here of my present lord saint Nicholas, the which had not suffered me an unhappy and an unprofitable servant of his to be damned and lost everlastingly. . . .

Ye knew well how I disposed me in my living when I was in the world, as those things that were open to man's sight. Also I continued in the foul sin of drunkenness unto my last end, of an evil custom. Nevertheless it was not my will, for greatly it displeased me and mickle I sorrowed that I could not leave that vice. Soothly oftentimes I rose against myself, surely purposing to leave and cast away the foul vice of drunkenness that I was holden in. But, anon, what for the lust of drinking and the importunity of fellowship that I drank with, I was constrained to drink after the measure of mine old custom, whereby I was overcome and drawn again bound into lust and custom of the same sin, that was in mine own unmeasurable taking and appetite. Truly among this, by the mercy of God, the which will that no man perish, in my most blessed lord St Nicholas whom now ye follow graciously and presently, and whose parishioner also I was, such devotion I had that for any occasion I never left, but whatsoever I might do to his worship I did it full devoutly. And how mickle ever I gave me towards even to drunkenness, I used evermore to be at matins, for anon as they rang I would be there, and oftentimes before the parish priest. Also I found continually a lamp, of mine own cost, in St Nicholas' chapel. And those things that were necessary to the ornaments of all the church, as in lights or any other things, I would diligently ordain therefore, as [though] I had been his familiar servant and manciple. And where I had not sufficient of mine own goods to do it, I would move others of the parish to help as it seemed needful. Soothly the gifts that men or women gave, I took them, and to

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

honourable uses full truly I spent them. Also twice in the year, that is at Christmas and at Easter, I would clean confess me of all my sins as well as I could to our parish priest, taking penances for them, and in part I did fulfil them diligently. Truly I did not observe and keep those things that I was commanded of my ghostly father, for oftentimes I left some things that I should have done, and [*word omitted*] those things that I should have been ware of. And of the commandment of my ghostly father I fasted the days of Advent as I did the Lent season; to the which days of Advent I added of mine own free will as many days before Advent as would make up the number of the days of Lent. And so on Christmas Day I would be houseled and receive the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's precious Body and Blood. But, alas, for sorrow! when that I should have been, that holy day of our Lord's birth, more holier and devouter in my living than other times, I turned me contrary unto other works and businesses of a worldly custom; wherefore it happened unto me also in mine last end that the wicked angel of the devil Sathanas, the which is causer and kindler of all evil, scorned me. . . . Soothly on Christmas Day, after that I had received the good Lord that I cannot remember without great horror and heaviness, I was drawn of an evil custom (as I said before) by overmuch drinking the same day into drunkenness again, to the great injury and wrong of such a Lord whom I had received a little before into my soul. And on the morrow I went to church as I used to do, sore wailing the foul vice the which I did the day before, purposing to beware of it and to do no more; but it was as void and vain. For by the occasion that I had of drinking, and the devil's stirring me thereto, I was destitute and lost the stableness of virtue and the mighty purpose of soberness that I had conceived; and so I fulfilled not my purpose in deed, but foul as I did yesterday so I did to-day, and by the delectation of over mickle drinking fell down again to drunkenness. Soothly the next day after following, the which is the third day after Christmas Day, I left not mine old custom of drinking, whereby I had lost the virtue of soberness and all my witsalso. When it was dark night, I went out of the place where I drank, and came home and went to bed as I was clothed and

## A SAINT IN NEED

shod, and a little I slept. And anon I woke, and would have risen, and said, as I had weened, that then it had rung to matins. But my wife told me Nay! and so I laid me down again. Truly then first I took a sleep, and anon after I took my death. And how I felt death suddenly come upon me I will tell you. A certain devil that tempted and stirred me to the vice of drunkenness thought to himself that an I died in such a peril without any contradiction he would me draw to hell, presuming also to have then power on me to do whatsoever he would, for mine obedience and consenting in that vice to him. But again full mickle he dreaded lest, by the merits of my patron St Nicholas, I should any time prevail against him by amendment of my living if I lived any longer; and so by his presumptuous power cruelly me strangled. Truly I felt him like an owl go into my mouth, the which oftentimes full evilly I opened to drink, and so through my throat slyly came down to my heart. And anon I knew that it was the devil. Notwithstanding I was yet mindful of the mercies of God and also of mine own wretchedness, and with stable purpose vowed in my mind to God that I would purely and wholly confess me of all my sins, and utterly for ever forsake the vice of drunkenness. And to this I called as inwardly as I could on St Nicholas to be my borrow.<sup>1</sup> Soothly to this avisement unnethe was granted me the space of a moment. Truly then the wicked spirit sat down anon upon my heart and clipped<sup>2</sup> it with his cursed arms on every side. Also he drew out of his mouth an horrible vomit of venom and cast it all abroad, and so in the space of a twinkling of an eye he expelled and cast me out of my body. And anon after that, I was had forth through dark places by the cruel and incredible madness of wicked spirits, the which all to-beat me, tore me, sticked me, drew me and all to-brent<sup>3</sup> me, and carried me with them I wot not whither, but as they would to everlasting torments. Then anon my most meek and dear advocate St Nicholas, to whom I called with all mine heart at my last end, and whom ever in my life I have worshipped though I were a sinner, came then and mightily took and delivered me out of their hands, and here hath set me in this place of purgatory for my purgation. And,

<sup>1</sup> Pledge, or guarantor.

<sup>2</sup> Embraced.

<sup>3</sup> Burnt.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

howbeit that I suffer here sore and hard penance, I count it lightly while I have no dread of the wicked spirits, and also that their tyranny and importable<sup>1</sup> cruelty is ceased and gone from me. And soothly after this for certain I am and trust to have rest and everlasting joy by my lord St Nicholas. . . . O, he said, soothly an if I had known, when that I was in the world living, such things as I know now, I would have taught and defended all the world from that great hurt and damage how the people and folk might be sure and safe from the falling of sudden death. Truly and verily, an the Christian people would write daily on their foreheads and about the place of their heart, with their finger or in any other wise, these two words that containeth the mystery of the health and salvation of mankind, that is to wit and to say JHESUS NAZARENUS, without doubt the true people of our Saviour Jesu Christ should be harmless and preserved from such a great peril and hurt.

### 22. THE BROKEN VOW

(p. 74.)

AMONG them that brake their vows I saw a young knight brenning<sup>2</sup> in the midst of fire whom I knew sometime full well. And as I enquired of him why he was put in so great pain, this he told me. "My life," he said, "that I lived was but barren and vain and also vicious; for I was insolent and nice in pride and elation, and foul and unclean by the vice of lechery. Notwithstanding for this I am now specially punished, because I cast away from me the sign of the holy cross, the which I had taken upon me in a vow that I made to go to the Holy Land, howbeit that I took the cross not for devotion but for vain glory, the which I loved to have had of the lord that I served. Truly every night I labour in going as mickle as I may to make an end of that pilgrimage, but what for feebleness of strength and contrariness of the weather and also sharpness of the way, I am let [so] greatly that unneth I may go at one time a full little day's journey. Soothly when the morning beginneth, flyen to me wicked spirits being mad in

<sup>1</sup> Insupportable.

<sup>2</sup> Burn.

## THE BROKEN VOW

all cruelness, and drawen me again to the place of my pains, where evermore, all the daytime, I am greatly pained in fire; nevertheless with a certain amendment of lesser disease, though it be little. And again when night cometh, I am restored to the place where I left last my journey, and so I go forth on my pilgrimage; and when the morning is come I am drawn again and cast to pains. And all that have vowed to go to the Holy Land, and after did cast from them their cross, and went not thither, in like wise as I go, they be compelled to do their pilgrimage: if so be they may have the grace of God in their last end to repent them, as I had to repent me for breaking of my vow, and then by the wholesome remedy of confession this sin that was deadly sin may be changed to a venial sin. Otherwise all that break that same vow be put to eternal damnation.

### 23. PRIESTS IN PURGATORY

(p. 81.)

ALSO many priests that by the grace of God left their vicious living of unchastity in very contrition of heart with confession of mouth when they lived, and because they had not done penance sufficiently, I saw them tormented in innumerable pains. Truly then I thought to myself that full few priests were there found, of the great number that is of them in all the world that had deserved pains after their death for breaking their chastity; and to this it was so answered: "Therefore full few be here tormented of the number of such persons, for unneth it is seldom seen that any man of them were verily penitent and contrite while they lived for their sins; wherefore it is no doubt but that the great multitude of them be utterly damned."

### 24. THE VISION OF PARADISE

(p. 107.)

FURTHERMORE now when we were past all these places and sights aforesaid, and had gone a good space more inward, and ever grew to us more and more joy and fairness of places:

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also at the last we saw afar a full glorious wall of crystal whose height no man might see and length no man might consider: and when we came thither I saw within-forth a full fair bright shining gate, and stood open, save it was signed and laid over with a cross. Truly thither came flockmeal the multitude of those blessed souls that were next to it, and would come in at that fair gate. The cross was set in the midst of that gate; and now she was lift up on high and so gave to them that came thither an open and a free entering; and afterward she was letten down again, and so sparred others out that would have comen in. But how joyful they were that went in, and how reverently they tarried that stood without abiding the lifting up of the cross again, I cannot tell by no words. Soothly here St Nicholas and I stood still together; and the liftings up of the cross and the lettings down again, whereby some went in and some tarried without, I beheld long time with great wonder. And at the last St Nicholas and I came thither to the same gate hand in hand. And when we came thither the cross was lifted up; and so they that were there went in. Soothly then my fellow St Nicholas freely went in and I followed; but suddenly and unadvised the cross of the gate came down upon our hands and departed me from my fellow, St Nicholas; and when I saw this, full sore afeard I was. Then said St Nicholas to me, "Be not afeard, but have only full certain faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and doubtless thou shalt come in." And after this my hope and trust came again, and the cross was lift up, and so I came in: but what brightness and clearness of light was there-withinforth, all about, no man ask nor seek of me; for I can not only [not] tell it by word but also I cannot remember it in mind. That glorious shining light was bright and smooth, and so ravished a man that beheld it that it bare a man above himself by the great brightness of light; in so mickle that, whatsoever I saw before, it was as nothing methought in comparison of it. That brightness, though it were inestimable, nevertheless it dulled not a man's sight; it rather sharpened it. Soothly it shined full marvellously, but more inestimably it delighted a man that beheld it, and wonderfully compelled a man's sight to see it. And withinforth nothing I might see, but light and the

## THE VISION OF PARADISE

wall of crystal through the which we came in. And also from the ground up to top of that wall were degrees ordained and disposed fair and marvellously, by the which the joyful company that was come in at the aforesaid gate gladly ascended up. There was no labour, there was no difficulty, there was no tarrying in their ascending; and the higher they went the gladder they were. Soothly I stood beneath on the ground, and long time I saw and beheld how they that came in at the gate ascended up by the same degrees. And at the last as I looked up higher I saw in a throne of joy sitting our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in likeness of man, and about Him as it seemed to me were a five hundred souls which late had climbed up to that glorious throne, and so they came to our Lord and worshipped Him and thanked Him for His great mercy and grace showed and done to them. And some were seen on the upper parts of the wall as they had walked hither and thither. Truly I knew for certain that this place, where I saw our Lord sitting on a throne, was not the high heaven of heavens where the blessed spirits of angels and the holy souls of righteous men joy in the sight of God, seeing Him in His majesty as He is; where also innumerable thousands of holy spirits and angels serve Him and assist Him: but then from thence withouten any hardness or tarrying, they ascend up to the high heaven, the which is blessed of the sight of the everlasting Godhead, where only the holy angels and the souls of righteous men that be of angels' perfection see the invisible and immortal King of all worlds face to face, the which hath only immortality, and dwelleth in light that is inaccessible: for no man may come to it, the which no mortal man seeth neither may see. Soothly he is seen only of holy spirits that be pure and clean, the which be not grieved by no corruption of body neither of soul. And in this vision that I saw, so mickle I conceived in my soul of joy and gladness that whatsoever may be said of it by men's mouth full little it is, and unsufficient to express the joy of mine heart that I had there.

Therefore, when I had seen all these sights aforesaid and many other innumerable, my lord St Nicholas that held me by the hand said shortly this to me, "Lo son," he said, "now partly after thy petition and great desire thou hast seen and



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beholden the state of the world that is to come, as it might be to-possible. Also the perils of them that offend and earn the pains of sinners; the rest also of them that have done their purgation; the desires of them that be going to heavenward; and the joys of them that now be come to the court of heaven; and also the joy of Christ's reigning. And now thou must go again to thyself and to thine, and to the world's fighting. Truly thou shalt have and perceive the joys that thou hast seen, and mickle more, if thou continue and persevere in the dread of God." And when he had said this to me, he brought me forth through the same gate that we came in; wherefore full heavy and sorry was I and more than a man may suppose; for well I knew that I must turn again from that heavenly bliss to this world's wretchedness. And greatly he exhorted me, how I should dispose me to abide the day of my calling out of my body in cleanness of heart and of body, and meekness of spirit with diligent keeping of my religion. "Diligently" (he said to me) "keep the commandments of God, and dispose thy living after the example of righteous men. And truly so it shall be, that after the term of thy bodily living thou shalt be admitted blessedly to their fellowship everlastingly."

And while the holy confessor St Nicholas this wise spake yet with me, suddenly I heard there a solemn peal and a ringing of a marvellous sweetness, and as all the bells in the world, or whatsoever is of sounding, had been rungen together at once. Truly in this peal and ringing brake out also a marvellous sweetness, and a variant mingling of melody sounded withal. And I wot not whether the greatness of melody or the sweetness of sounding of bells was more to be wondered. And to so great a noise I took good heed, and full greatly my mind was suspended to hear it. Soothly anon as that great and marvellous sounding and noise was ceased, suddenly I saw myself departed from the sweet fellowship of my duke<sup>1</sup> and guide St Nicholas. Then was I returned to myself again; and anon heard the voice of my brethren that stood about our bed; also my bodily strength came again to me a little and a little, and mine eyes opened to the use of seeing, as ye saw right well. Also my sickness and feebleness by the which I was

<sup>1</sup> Leader.

## THE VISION OF PARADISE

long time full sore diseased was utterly excluded and gone from me, and sat up before you so strong and mighty as I was before by it sorrowful and heavy. And I weened that I had been then in the church afore the altar, where I worshipped first the cross. . . .

[To which the writer of the work adds an epilogue.]

Many instructions and open examples be here at the beginning of this narration that evidently proven this vision not to be of man's conceit, but utterly of the will of God, the which would have it shewed to Christian people. Nevertheless, if there be so great infidelity or infirmity of any persons that cannot believe to these things aforesaid, let them consider the great sickness and feebleness of him that saw it, so suddenly and so soon healed into a very witness and truth of this vision that he saw. Also let them marvel the great noise that was about him, and also how that he was pricked in his feet [by the Brethren] with needles, by the which he could not in any wise be moved. Furthermore let them take heed to his eyes that were so far fallen down into his head, and [how he] was not seen unneth to breathe the space of ij days, and also after a full long space of hours unneth [at the] last might be perceived in him a full small moving as a thin thread in his vital veins. Also let them consider his continual weeping and tears the which he had afterward many days. . . . [But] full delectable it was to him, as he said, from that time forth, as oft as he heard any solemn peal of ringing of bells; because it would then come to his mind again, the full sweet peal and melody the which he heard when he was among the blessed souls in Paradise. Soothly, after that he was come to himself and his brethren had told him that now is the holy time of Easter, then first he believed, when he heard them ring solemnly to compline<sup>1</sup>; for then he knew certainly that the peal and melody that he heard in Paradise with so great joy and gladness betokened the same solemnity of Easter in the which our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ rose up visibly and bodily from death unto life; to Whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be now and evermore everlasting joy and bliss. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> The last of the day-services.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The following anecdote from the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais, lib. VI, c. 99, occurs also in a MS. of the Bibliothèque Nationale of the end of the twelfth century. See Toulmin Smith, *Contes de Nicole Bozon*, pp. 140, 279.

### 25. THE CHILD AND THE CHRIST

THERE is a famous city on the Rhine named Speyer, where men worship an image of St Mary, Mother of God, with her child. A little child, while his mother was praying afar, came to this statue with a slice of bread in his hand, and broke off a crumb which he held out to the image of the wailing Child, beseeching it in such words as German children are wont to babble, "Puppe, pappe! Puppe, pappe!"<sup>1</sup> At length, when the boy insisted, the image of the almighty Babe is said to have embraced him and addressed him thus, "*Puppe*, weep not; within three days thou shalt *pappen* with Me." His mother heard and trembled, and related this miracle to the senior canon, who even then came to the spot; and he, considering the matter carefully, replied, "Take heed! for after the day thus named thou shalt have thy child no more." The child was seized at once with a fever and died on the third day; wherefore he doth now most undoubtedly feast among the Innocents of Bethlehem.

The so-called *Lanercost Chronicle*, from which these extracts are taken, was not written at the monastery of that name, as earlier antiquaries supposed, but by a Grey Friar, probably of Carlisle. It extends in its original form to 1307, but is partly based on older materials. Like nearly all compilations by the early friars, it is full of picturesque anecdotes and human touches. It was edited for the Maitland Club by Father Stevenson in 1839. A translation of the greater part of it by Sir Herbert Maxwell has been printed in the *Scottish Historical Review*; though not always accurate, it is very readable and interesting.

### 26. A VISION OF KING ARTHUR

(p. 23, A.D. 1216.)

SEEING that we here mention Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, I will set down that which I have heard from my elders. This man, vain-hearted and worldly, as is too

<sup>1</sup> "Little boy, eat!": cf. Dante, *Purg.* xi, 105. In the next line the sense seems to require the genitive *cunctipotentis*.

## A VISION OF KING ARTHUR

customary among our bishops, once assembled his huntsmen according to custom, and repaired to one of his church forests for the chase of wild beasts, when he should have taken his pleasure in the solace of men's souls. When therefore the beaters were scattered apart throughout the wood, it came to pass that the Bishop went by a certain glade wherein he found a fair new mansion that he had never seen before. He marvelled at its beauty, and hastened to see it, wondering sore who might be its builder. As he drew near, there came to meet him certain marvellously clad attendants, who forthwith invited him to come without delay to the banquet of their king, who even now awaited him. He hesitated and excused himself, saying that he had with him no garment fit for a bishop to sit down to meat in; but they, laying a proper mantle upon his shoulders, brought this guest to the king's presence, before whom he made obeisance. He was set at this great prince's right hand, where the more delicate dishes and drinks were ministered unto him. Yet he was not so stupefied but that he asked the king, among the rest who sat at meat, who he was and whence he had come thither; who confessed himself to be Arthur, once lord of the whole realm of Britain. Peter, clapping his hands for joy, asked whether he were among the saved; to whom the king made answer: "In truth, I await God's great mercy." Then said the Bishop: "Who, my lord, will believe me when I tell how I have to-day seen and spoken with King Arthur?" "Close thine hand!" quoth the king; and he closed it. Then said he: "Open!" and from the open hand there flew forth a butterfly. Then said Arthur: "All thy life long shalt thou have this memorial of me, that, at whatsoever season of the year thou wouldst fly one of these insects, thou mayest do thus and thou shalt have it [in thy hand]." Which blessing became in process of time so notorious that men often begged a butterfly of him for his benediction; and many called him the Bishop of the Butterfly. What Arthur's soul, yet mortal, intended hereby to teach, let him perpend who can guess better than I.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

### 27. TRAVELLERS' TALES

(p. 97, A.D. 1275.)

IN these days there tarried at Hartlepool in England, William, Bishop of the Orkneys, an honourable man and a lover of letters, who related many marvels of the islands subject to Norway, whereof I record some here that they may be remembered. He told how, in one part of Iceland, the sea burneth for a whole mile round, leaving foul and black ashes behind. Elsewhere fire bursteth from the earth at certain times, after five or seven years' space, suddenly consuming villages and all on its path, nor can it be quenched or put to flight save by holy water consecrated by the hand of a priest. More marvellous still, he told us how men may plainly hear in that fire the lamentations of souls there tortured.<sup>1</sup>

(p. 131, A.D. 1289.)

The aforesaid Bishop [Hugh Biblinensis] told us again how, from that place on Mount Olivet where our Lord answered to the scoffs of the Jews, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out," even unto that gate of Jerusalem wherethrough He rode on the ass to His passion, thou canst not pick up a pebble and break it, but thou wilt find in the midst thereof the form as of an human tongue, as if in fulfilment of the Creator's will.

### 28. A NOBLE PLURALIST

(p. 158, A.D. 1294.)

THERE died in London Bogo de Clare, illustrious in name but not in life; whose end, as men report, was not very honourable [*clarus*] yet accordant to his deserts; for he had held innumerable churches, and had ill governed such as Christ had bought with His trading.<sup>2</sup> For he was a mere

<sup>1</sup> This was of course the common medieval belief; cf. the vision in Thomas of Eccleston (R.S. p. 67) of Frederick II borne off by devils to Etna.

<sup>2</sup> Or possibly, "had bought for him to deal with": the text seems corrupt here. There are elsewhere a good many words evidently misread by the editor: e.g. the *curialis exercens* of the next line should obviously be *curialis existens*. Similarly in

## A NOBLE PLURALIST

courtier, who cared not for Holy Orders but quenched the cure of souls and squandered the revenues of his churches; nor did he esteem Christ's spouse highly enough to provide the church out of her own revenues with necessary vestments untorn and undefiled; as might be proved by many profane instances, whereof I will tell one by way of example. In the honourable church of Simonburn, whereof he was rector, on the holy day of Easter, I saw, instead of a reredos over the high altar, a wattle of twigs daubed with fresh cow-dung; yet that living was valued at seven hundred marks yearly. Moreover he was so wanton and wasteful that he gave the old queen of France for a gift a lady's chariot of unheard-of workmanship; to wit, all of ivory, both body and wheels, and all that should have been of iron was of silver even to the smallest nail, and its awning was of silk and gold even to the least cord whereby it was drawn; the price whereof, as men say, was three pounds sterling; but the scandal was of a thousand thousand.<sup>1</sup>

the Maitland Club *Illustrations of Scottish History* (Battle of Neville's Cross, fol. 242a), the same editor prints *inniscata* and confesses himself puzzled: the word is plainly *inniscata*, which makes just the sense required.

<sup>1</sup> We must multiply these moneys, of course, by 15 or 20 to get modern values. In the last line but one the word *thousand* has evidently dropped out between *three* and *pounds*, unless we are to suppose that this was only the price of a single cord. Bogo de Clare, though his clerical income would have compared poorly with that of William of Wykeham or Cardinal Wolsey, seems to have been the most notorious pluralist of the thirteenth century; the author of the Worcester Chronicle speaks of him with bated breath (*Annales Monastici*, R.S. vol. iv, p. 517). It is some satisfaction to know that he and another of the same feather did not collect their rents without friction; the tenants of Rotherfield rebelled against Bogo's bailiff in 1283 and destroyed his tallies, while in 1299 there was a more formal insurrection "with banners displayed" against an alien rector of Pagham (*Victoria Hist. of Sussex*, vol. II, p. 12). Another significant entry is among the pleas before the royal justices at Oxford in 1285 (*Oxford Hist. Soc.* vol. xviii, p. 211). "The jurors present that Richard Everard and Walter de Chawsey, Bailiffs of Bogo de Clare, have lately raised a gallows within his domain of Holywell, some ten years past, they know not by what warrant. And a certain Thomas de Bensington was caught with a certain mare, and taken to the said Bogo's Court, by sentence whereof he was hanged at those gallows; and Alice le Welsh was hanged there also. Wherefore the sheriff was bidden to send for the said Bogo and bailiffs. And the said Bogo came and said that he held his church [of Holywell] by gift of the lord Henry, father of the present king, which church he found seised of the aforesaid liberties; and that all his predecessors, parsons of the aforesaid church, were seised of the same from time immemorial." The jury admitted his right, which was indeed unquestionable: but the entry is significant as showing how the growing ideas of the age were to some extent shocked by this anomaly of a rector who, as lord of the manor, had the right to hang men and women.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Jacques de Vitry studied at Paris, was ordained priest in 1210, and devoted himself to preaching by the advice of the Blessed Mary of Oignies, whose life he also wrote. After her death in 1213 he preached the crusade first against the Albigensians and then against the Saracens. In 1214 he was elected Bishop of Acre; here he worked many years with his accustomed zeal, until at last, disheartened by the vices and failures of the crusaders, he resigned in or about 1227. Next year he was made a cardinal, and in 1239 elected Patriarch of Jerusalem; but the Pope was unwilling to spare him. He died probably in 1240. A passage from one of his letters, recording his enthusiasm for the new-born Franciscan Order, may be found in Sabatier's *St François d'Assise*, c. xiii, p. 261. His *Historia Occidentalis* and *Historia Orientalis* describe the age in language even more unfavourable than that of Roger Bacon and others quoted in this book; but the main human interest of his works is contained in the *Exempla*, or stories for the use of preachers, published by Professor Crane for the Folk-Lore Society in 1890. A good many of these had already appeared anonymously among T. Wright's *Latin Stories*. Professor Crane's edition, though of very great value, contains a good many misreadings which I have been able to amend by collations procured from the Paris MS. References are to folios of the MS. Lat. 17509 of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and to pages in Crane's edition.

### 29. THE BOY-ARCHDEACON

(fol. 4, p. 1.)

How wretched and mad are those men who commit the cure of many thousand souls to their little nephews whom they would not trust with three pears, lest they should eat them!<sup>1</sup> I have heard how one of these boys, after receiving an arch-deaconry from a bishop his uncle, was set solemnly in his stall during the ceremony of installation, and was found not yet to have outgrown the needful ministrations of his nurse.

### 30. THE EXACTING BISHOP

(fol. 10, p. 2.)

I HAVE heard of a certain priest who could not satisfy the bishop's cook, who demanded innumerable dishes to be prepared for his master's use; until at last he cried in weariness and

<sup>1</sup> For this story see Extract no. 55.

## THE EXACTING BISHOP

grief, "I have no more now to give but ribs of the Crucifix!" which indeed he caused to be roasted and placed before the bishop on the table.<sup>1</sup>

### 31. THE SIMPLE KNIGHT

(fol. 105, p. 62.)

I HAVE heard how a certain knight, who never heard the truth in preaching nor had been well instructed in the faith, and who, being asked why he went not gladly to hear mass, (which is of such dignity and virtue that Christ and His angels ever attend upon it,) answered in simple words: "This I knew not; nay, I thought that the priests performed their mass for the offerings' sake." But, after hearing the truth, from henceforward he began gladly and devoutly to hear mass.

### 32. A KNOTTY QUESTION

(fol. 113, p. 68.)

I HAVE heard how a certain woman, in her extreme simplicity, would not receive the sacraments from unworthy priests, and that she did this not from settled malice but from ignorance.<sup>2</sup> God, wishing to recall her from her error, sent in her dreams a vehement and almost intolerable thirst; and it seemed to her that she was over a well whence a certain

<sup>1</sup> It was very frequently complained that the expense of entertaining Bishops or Archdeacons on their visitations pressed unduly upon monks and clergy. A theological dictionary of the early fourteenth century (see vol. III, no. 56) has on fol. 135a, "But thou wilt say: 'What can the wretched rector do? For the Rural Dean visiteth him with two horses. . . and the Archdeacon with five or seven. . . and the Bishop with twenty or thirty. . . and the Archbishop with forty or fifty.'" The author then does his best to reconcile the rectors to this burden by reasoned argument.

<sup>2</sup> This was still a vexed question in the thirteenth century. In 1074, Pope Hildebrand attempted to stop clerical concubinage by forbidding the laity to attend the ministrations of unworthy priests. The effect of this was so disastrous that the doctrine was finally abandoned. St Thomas Aquinas, while admitting it in theory, fears its dangers in practice (*Summa*, pars. iii, quaest. 83, art. 9). The fact was that it lent too strong a handle against the Church, and encouraged heretics who maintained that the virtue of the Sacrament was annulled by the unworthiness of the minister. The duty of abstention from the ministrations of sinful priests became a Wycliffite doctrine: see H. C. Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 3rd ed. vol. I, p. 473.



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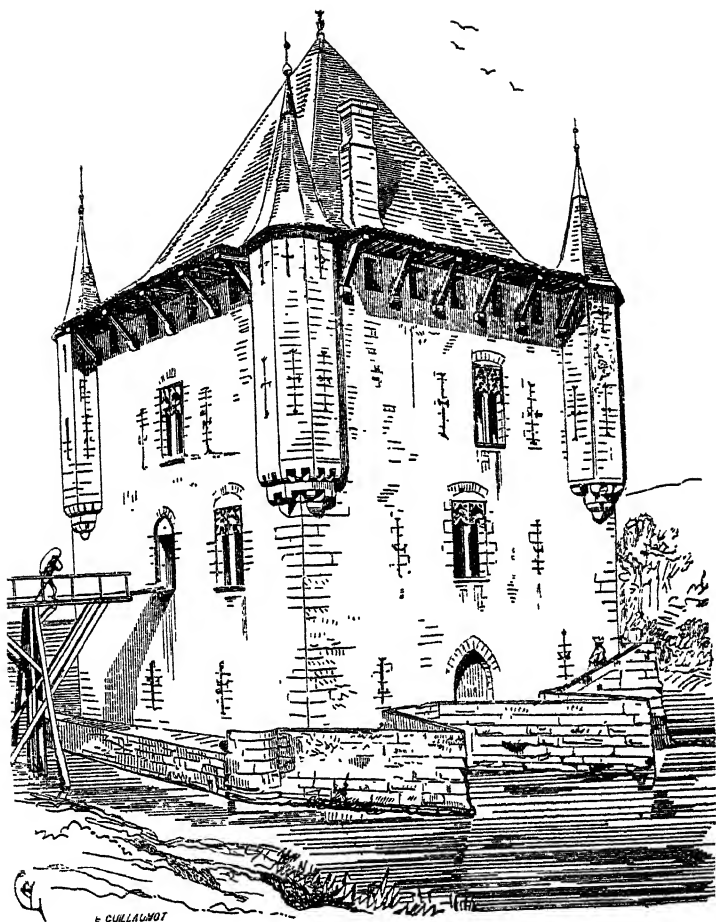
leper drew water as clear as crystal, with a most comely vessel and a golden cord. Seeing therefore that many went up and drank, she also came forward; but the leper withdrew his hand, saying: "Thou who dost disdain to take the sacraments from evil priests, how wilt thou accept water from a leper's hand?" Most abominable, therefore, is that doctrine of the heretics who say that the virtue of the sacraments hangeth upon the lives of the ministers.

Caesarius of Heisterbach was possibly born, and certainly educated, at Cologne, then one of the richest and busiest cities of Europe. After some inward struggles, he was at last converted by the story of the harvester-monks and the Virgin Mary (vol. iv, no. 16); upon which he entered the Cistercian monastery of Heisterbach in the Siebengebirge. In this house, then at the height of its efficiency and influence, he finally became Prior and Teacher of the Novices, for whose special guidance he wrote his delightful *Dialogus Miraculorum*, one of the most intimate documents of the Middle Ages. He also wrote a few biographical and chronological treatises, and a book of Homilies. All these were apparently written between 1220 and 1235; the last dated event he mentions occurred in 1233. The Dialogue was printed five or six times between 1475 and 1605; the Homilies only once, in 1615. The author's faults are those of his time; his virtues of earnestness and vividness will perhaps be apparent even from these extracts. Father B. Tissier, reprinting him in 1662 in the *Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium*, praises him as just the author to arouse the slumbering embers of strict Cistercian observance, and adds: "yet it is lamentable that this authority, who has deserved so excellently of the Church, should now at last, after so many centuries, be called not only fabulous but even erroneous; whereas, if he be attentively read even by a jealous critic, nothing can be found in him strange to Catholic doctrine" (t. II, *Preface*). The modern view is rather that of Father Karl Unkel: "The almost scrupulous love of truth which Caesarius shows in his anecdotes is well known, but equally so is his great credulousness" (*Annalen des Historischen Vereins f. d. Niederrhein*, Heft 34, 1879, p. 5). The interlocutors in the Dialogue are Caesarius himself, and a novice whom he is instructing. I quote by volume and page from Joseph Strange's critical edition (Cologne, 1851).

### 33. THE USURER'S FATE

(Caes. Heist. vol. I, p. 70.)

IN the days when John the Master of Schools at Xanten, and Oliver, Master of Schools at Cologne, preached the crusade against the Saracens in the diocese of Utrecht (as I



### A MEDIEVAL MILL

(From Viollet-le-Duc's *Dict. de l'Architecture*, vol. vi, p. 409.)

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

was told by brother Bernard, who was then Oliver's colleague and fellow-preacher) there was a certain peasant named Gottschalk, if I remember rightly, who busied himself with usury. He took the cross with the rest; not from devotion, as events showed, but through the importunate urgency of the bystanders. When, by Pope Innocent's command, the dispensators collected ransom-money from the aged, the poor, and the sick, this same usurer feigned poverty and gave one of the dispensators about the sum of five marks, thus deceiving the priest. His neighbours afterwards testified that he might have given forty marks without thereby disinheriting his children, as he pretended. But God, who could not be deceived, presently put a terrible end to his trickery. The wretch sat about in the taverns, provoking God and mocking His pilgrims with such words as these: "Ye fools will cross the seas and waste your substance and expose your lives to manifold dangers; while I shall sit at home with my wife and children, and get a like reward to yours through the five marks with which I redeemed my cross." But the righteous Lord, willing to show openly how great pleasure He took in the travail and cost of the pilgrims, and how hateful in His eyes were the fraud and blasphemy of this scoffer, gave over the wretched man to Satan, that he might learn not to blaspheme. As he slept one night beside his wife, he heard as it were the sound of a mill-wheel turning in his own mill that adjoined his house: whereupon he cried for his servant, saying, "Who hath let the mill-wheel loose? Go and see who is there." The servant went and came back, for he was too sore afraid to go further. "Say, who is there?" cried the master. "Such horror fell upon me at the mill-door," answered the fellow, "that I must perforce turn back." "Well!" cried he, "even though it be the Devil, I will go and see." So, naked as he was, but for a cloak which he threw over his shoulders, he opened the mill-door, and looked in: when a sight of horror met his eyes. There stood two coal-black horses, and by their side an ill-favoured man as black as they, who cried to the boor, "Quick! mount this horse, for he is brought for thee." He grew pale and trembled, for the voice of command sounded ill in his ears. While therefore he hesitated to obey, the Devil cried again,

## THE USURER'S FATE

"Why tarriest thou? cast aside thy cloak and come." (For the crusader's cross, which he had taken, was sewn on to his cloak.) In brief, feeling desperately in his heart the force of this devil's call, and no longer able to resist, he cast off his cloak, entered the mill, and mounted the horse—or rather the Devil. The Fiend himself mounted another; and, side by side, they swept in breathless haste from one place of torture to another, wherein the wretched man saw his father and mother in miserable torments, and a multitude of others whom he knew not to be dead. There also he saw a certain honest knight lately dead, Elias von Rheineck, castellan of Horst, seated on a mad cow with his face towards her tail and his back to her horns; the beast rushed to and fro, goring his back every moment so that the blood gushed forth. To whom the usurer said, "Lord, why suffer ye this pain?" "This cow," replied the knight, "I tore mercilessly from a certain widow; wherefore I must now endure this merciless punishment from the same beast." Moreover there was shown him a burning fiery chair, wherein could be no rest, but torment and interminable pain to him who sat there: and it was said, "Now shalt thou return to thine own house, and thou shalt have thy reward in this chair." Within a while the Fiend brought him back and laid him in the mill, leaving him half-dead. Here he was found by his wife and family, who brought him to bed and asked where he had been, or whence he came. "I have been taken to hell," he answered, "where I saw such and such tortures: where also my guide showed me a chair, which (as he said) was prepared for me, and wherein after three days I was to receive my reward." The priest was called forthwith, whom the wife besought to comfort his weakness, relieve his despair, and exhort him to those things which belonged to his salvation. But when the priest warned him to repent of his sins and make a clean breast in confession, saying that none should despair of God's mercy, he answered: "What avail such words as these? I cannot confess; I hold it useless to confess; that which is decreed must be fulfilled in me. My seat is made ready; after the third day I must come thither, and there must I receive the reward of my deeds." And thus, unrepentant, unconfessed, unanointed and unanointed,

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he died on the third day and found his grave in hell; and whereas the priest forbade him Christian burial, yet he took a bribe from the wife to lay him in the churchyard; for which he was afterwards accused in the Synod of Utrecht and punished I know not how. It is scarce three years since these things came to pass.

### 34. MARY AND CHRIST

(Caes. Heist. vol. 1, p. 78.)

THERE lived not five years since near Floreffe, a Praemonstratensian monastery in the diocese of Liège, a noble youth whose father died and left wealth proportionate to his greatness and his state. The youth was knighted and, within a brief space, striving after earthly glory, he fell into extreme poverty. For he was altogether given up to tourneying for the sake of worldly glory, and he spent lavishly on minstrels and buffoons: until, his yearly revenues no longer sufficing for such prodigality, he was compelled to sell his paternal heritage. Now there lived hard by a knight rich and honourable though a courtier, to whom the aforesaid youth partly sold, partly pledged, his estates; and now, having no more to sell or mortgage, he purposed to go into exile, thinking it less intolerable to go begging among strangers than to bear the shame of poverty among his kinsfolk and acquaintance. But he had a steward, a man of iniquity, Christian by name but unchristian in deed, and utterly given up to the service of the fiends. He, seeing his master so sad, and knowing well the cause, said to him, "My lord, would ye fain become rich?" "Gladly," answered the youth, "so that it were with God's blessing." To whom the steward: "Fear not, only follow me, and all shall be well." Forthwith he followed after this wretch, (as Eve after the serpent's voice and a bird after the fowler's snare,) doomed to be quickly caught in the devil's toils. The steward led him that same night through a wood into a marshy place, and began to converse as with another person. "To whom speakest thou?" said the youth: but this Unjust Steward answered to his master, "Only keep silence, and care not with whom I may speak." When therefore he

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spake a second time, and the youth asked again the same question, the steward answered, "My speech is with the Devil." Then was the young man seized with a great horror: for who indeed would not have been dismayed at that spot and hour to hear such speech as this? For the steward said to the Devil, "Lord, behold I have brought hither this noble youth my master, beseeching your grace and your majesty that he may be thought worthy to be restored by your help to his former honours and riches." Then said the Fiend, "If he will be my devoted and faithful servant, I will give him great wealth, and add thereunto such glory and honour as his forefathers never had." Then answered the steward, "He will gladly and faithfully obey you for such a reward." "If then," said the Devil, "he would fain receive such gifts at my hand, he must forthwith renounce the Most High." While the young man, hearing this, refused to obey, the man of perdition said to him, "Why do ye fear to utter one little word? Speak it, and renounce God." At length the wretched youth was persuaded by the steward to deny his Creator with his mouth, to repudiate him with his hands,<sup>1</sup> and to do homage to the Devil. When this crime had been committed, the Devil added, "The work is yet imperfect. He must renounce also the Mother of the Most High; for she it is who doth us most harm. Those whom the Son in His justice casts away, the Mother, in her superfluity of mercy, brings back again to indulgence." Again the serpent whispered in the youth's ear, that he should obey his lord in this also, and deny the Mother even as he had denied the Son. But at this word the youth was utterly dismayed, and being moved beyond all measure, he said, "That will I never do!" "Why?" said the other, "Thou hast done the greater deed, do now the lesser; for the Creator is greater than the creature." But he replied, "I will never deny her, even though I must beg from door to door for all the days of my life": and he would not consent. Thus therefore both departed, leaving the matter yet unfinished, but burdened with a heavy load of sin, both the

<sup>1</sup> *Exfestucare*: see Du Cange, *Glossarium*, s.v. *Festuca*. This was a formal legal proceeding, quite different from Vanni Fucci's blasphemous gesture in Dante (*Inf.* xxv. 1-3).

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

steward who had persuaded and the youth who had consented. And as they went together they came to a certain church, the door whereof had been left half-shut by the bell-ringer as he went out. Whereupon the youth leapt from his horse and gave it to the steward, saying, "Wait here for me until I return to thee." And entering the church before dawn, he fell down before the altar and began from the depths of his heart to call upon the Mother of Mercy: (for upon that altar stood the image of the Virgin Mother herself, holding the Child Jesus in her lap.) And lo! by the merits of that most glorious Star of the Sea, the true dayspring began to arise in the heart of this our youth. Such contrition did the Lord vouchsafe to him for the honour of His Mother, whom he had not denied, that he roared for vexation of spirit, and filled the church with the wild vehemence of his lamentations. At the same hour the aforesaid knight, who had all the youth's lands, turned aside by God's providence, (as it is believed,) to that same church; and, seeing it empty and thinking that service was being held there, (especially for the clamour that he heard within,) he entered alone. Then, finding this youth so well-known to him weeping before the altar, and supposing that he wept only for his own calamity, he secretly crept behind a column and awaited the issue of the matter. So when the youth dared not to name nor call upon that terrible Majesty whom he had denied, but only importuned His most loving Mother with lamentable cries, then that blessed and singular Advocate of Christians spake thus through the lips of her statue, "Sweetest Son, pity this man." But the Child made no answer to His Mother, turning His face from her. When therefore she besought Him again, pleading that the youth had been misled, He turned His back upon His Mother, saying, "This man hath denied Me, what should I do to him?" Thereupon the statue rose, laid her Child upon the altar, and threw herself on the ground at His feet, saying, "I beseech thee, Son, forgive him this sin for my sake." Then the Child raised His Mother up and answered her, "Mother, I could never deny Thee aught: behold, I forgive it all for thy sake." He had first forgiven the guilt for his contrition's sake, and then at His Mother's intercession He forgave the

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penalty of the sin. ¶ *Novice*. Why was He so hard to His so beloved Mother? ¶ *Monk*. That He might show the youth how grievously he had sinned against Him, and the more to punish the very sin against Himself by grief of heart. So the youth arose and left the church, sad indeed for his fault, but glad to have found mercy. The knight left the church secretly after him, and, feigning ignorance, asked him why his eyes were so wet and swollen; to whom the youth answered, "It is from the wind." Then said the knight, "My lord, the cause of your sadness is not hidden from me. I have an only daughter: if ye will have her to wife, I will restore with her all your possessions, and make you heir in addition to all mine own riches." The youth answered joyfully, "If ye would vouchsafe to do thus, it would be most pleasant unto me!" The knight went back to his wife and told her the whole story in order; she consented, the wedding was celebrated, and the youth received all his lands again for his wife's dowry. He still lives, I think, and his wife's father and mother; after whose death their inheritance will fall to him.

### 35. THE SAME

(Caes. Heist. vol. II, p. 382.)

A CERTAIN lay-brother of Hemmenrode was somewhat grievously tempted; wherefore as he stood and prayed he used these words, "In truth, Lord, if Thou deliver me not from this temptation, I will complain of Thee to Thy Mother!" The loving Lord, master of humility and lover of simplicity, prevented the lay-brother's complaint and presently relieved his temptation, as though He feared to be accused before His Mother's face. Another lay-brother standing behind the other's back smiled to hear this prayer, and repeated it for the edification of the rest. ¶ *Novice*. Who would not be edified by Christ's so great humility?



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

### 36. CUCKOO, CUCKOO!

From T. Wright's *Latin Stories*, p. 42. On p. 74 of the same book is a very interesting pendant, from MS. Reg. 7, E. iv. A very similar story is told of a Cistercian lay-brother (Caes. Heist. vol. 1, p. 295).

A CERTAIN woman was sick unto death, and her daughter said unto her: "Mother, send for the priest to confess thy sins." To whom the mother: "To what profit? If I am sick to-day, I shall be whole to-morrow, or the day after." But the daughter, noting how she grew worse, brought in many neighbours to give her like warning; to whom she: "What say ye or what do ye fear? I shall not die for twelve years. I have heard a cuckoo who told me so." At length in that peril of death she grew dumb. Then her daughter sent for the priest, who came and brought all that was needed, and coming to her asked whether she wished to confess anything. But she only said: "Cuckoo!" Then when the priest offered her the Lord's Body and asked again if she believed that He was her Saviour, again she answered: "Cuckoo!" The priest therefore went home, and soon after she died.

### 37. THE IMPENITENT HERETIC

(Caes. Heist. vol. 1, p. 298.)

ABOUT that time, under Archbishop Reinhold, many heretics were taken at Cologne, who, having been examined and convicted by learned men, were condemned by sentence of the secular courts. When, therefore, the sentence had been pronounced and they were to be led to the stake, one of them called Arnold, whom the others confessed as their master—as those have related who were there present—begged that bread and a bowl of water might be given him. Some were willing to grant this; but prudent men dissuaded them, lest aught should thus be done by the devil's work which might turn to the scandal and ruin of the weaker brethren. ¶ *Novice*: I wonder what he desired to do with the bread and water? ¶ *Monk*: As I conjecture from the words of another heretic, who some three years since was taken and burned by the King

## THE IMPENITENT HERETIC

of Spain, he would fain have made a sacrilegious communion with them, that it might be a viaticum to his followers to their eternal damnation. For there passed by our monastery a certain Spanish abbot of our Order, who sat with the Bishop and Prelates of churches to condemn this same heretic's errors; and he reported the heretic to have said that any boor at his own table, and from his own daily bread, might consecrate the Body of Christ: for this cursed man was a common blacksmith. ¶ *Novice*: What, then, was done with the heretics at Cologne? ¶ *Monk*: They were brought out of the city and all committed to the flames together, hard by the burial-ground of the Jews. When, therefore, they began to burn sore, then in the sight and in the hearing of many this Arnold, already half burned, laid his hand on the heads of his disciples, saying: "Be ye constant in your faith, for this day ye shall be with Laurence."—Yet God knoweth how far they were from the faith of St Laurence! Now there was among them a comely maiden, but an heretic, who was withdrawn from the flames by the compassion of certain bystanders, promising that they would either give her in marriage or place her, if she preferred, in a convent of nuns. To this she did indeed consent in words; but when the heretics were dead she said to those who held her: "Tell me where lies that seducer!" When, therefore, they had shown her Master Arnold's corpse, she tore herself from their hands, covered her face in her garment, fell upon the body of the dead man, and went down with him to hell, there to burn for ever and ever.

## 38. THE STORM OF BÉZIERS

(Caes. Heist. vol. 1, p. 301.)

THE preacher and chief [of this Crusade against the Albigensians] was Arnold, Abbot of Cîteaux, afterwards Archbishop of Narbonne. The Crusaders, therefore, came and laid siege to a great city named Béziers, wherein were said to be more than 100,000 men. So these heretics, in the sight of the besiegers, defiled the volume of the Holy Gospels in such wise as may not be repeated, and threw it from the wall against the Christians, after which they shot their arrows and cried,

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

"Behold your law, ye wretches." But Christ, the Author of the Gospels, suffered not unavenged this injury inflicted upon Him, for certain camp-followers, kindled with the zeal of faith, like lions, even as they of whom it is written in the Book of Maccabees, laid their ladders to the wall and went up fearlessly, so that the heretics were struck with terror from God and fell away from the walls; and these first, opening the doors to them who followed, took possession of the city. Learning, therefore, from their own confession, that Catholics were mingled with heretics in the city, they said then to the Abbot, "What shall we do, lord? We cannot discern between the good and evil." The Abbot (fearing, as also did the rest, lest they should feign themselves Catholics from fear of death, and should return again to their faithlessness after his departure,) is said to have answered: "Slay them, for God knoweth His own." So there they were slain in countless multitudes in that city.<sup>1</sup>

### 39. THE SIN OF TOURNAMENTS

(Caes. Heist. vol. II, p. 327.)

ON the night after the day when the army of the Duke of Louvain was slaughtered by the men of Liège, a certain servant of the Count of Lose, passing by Montenaeken, (which was the place of slaughter,) about nightfall, saw there a vast tournament of devils; and methinks these unclean spirits would never have exulted so greatly but that they had taken some great prey there: for there is no question but that such as are slain in tournaments go down to hell, if they be not helped by the benefit of contrition.

<sup>1</sup> Caesarius is the only authority for this incident of the siege, which happened some 15 or 20 years before he wrote: but the story is perfectly consistent with what we know from many other orthodox sources. This same Arnold, for instance, wrote off at once to tell the Pope how "the city of Béziers was stormed, and our men, sparing neither rank, nor age, nor sex, smote some 20,000 inhabitants with the edge of the sword." To this Innocent III, good and great man though he was, replied in terms of triumphant congratulation, exulting that God had not consumed the heretics with the breath of His nostrils, but had allowed "as many as possible of the Faithful to earn by their extermination a well-merited reward," *i.e.* as he explains lower down, "the salvation of their souls." Both letters are printed in Innocent's Register, bk. XII, nos. 108 and 136.

## APOSTLES BY LOT

### 40. APOSTLES BY LOT

(Caes. Heist. vol. II, pp. 129-133.)

IT is a very common custom among the matrons of our province to choose an Apostle for their very own by the following lottery: the names of the twelve Apostles are written each on twelve tapers, which are blessed by the priest and laid on the altar at the same moment. Then the woman comes and draws a taper; and whatsoever name that taper shall chance to bear, to that Apostle she renders special honour and service. A certain matron, having thus drawn St Andrew, and being displeased to have drawn him, laid the taper back on the altar and would have drawn another; but the same came to her hand again. Why should I make a long story? At length she drew one that pleased her, to whom she paid faithful devotion all the days of her life; nevertheless, when she came to her last end and was at the point of death, she saw not him but the Blessed Andrew standing at her bedside. "Lo!" he said, "I am that despised Andrew!" from which we can gather that sometimes saints thrust themselves even of their own accord into men's devotion. . . . Another matron, desiring to have a special Apostle, proceeded after the same fashion; but, having drawn the Blessed Jude (as I think), she cast that taper, apostolic name and all, behind the altar-chest; for she would fain have had one of the more famous Apostles, as St John the Evangelist or the Blessed James. The other, therefore, came to her in a dream by night and rebuked her sternly, complaining that she had displeased him and cast him shamefully behind the chest; nor was he appeased even so until he had added stripes to words, for she lay palsy-stricken on her bed for a whole year long. ¶ *Novice*. Is it lawful thus to choose Apostles by lot? ¶ *Monk*. It is written that St Matthew the Apostle was chosen by lot; yet not that he should be preferred to the rest, but that the number of twelve, diminished through Judas, should be filled up. Nevertheless I think that lots of this kind have come down by tradition from the election of St Matthew. I have heard at Cologne a learned priest publicly reproving such elections in church; "all the Apostles," said he, "are equally holy, wherefore all should be equally

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

honoured by us; or, if we are to show special honour to any, it should be in my judgment to the blessed Peter, through whom our country was converted to the faith, and whom Christ appointed as a special Apostle to us.<sup>1</sup>

### 41. THE SACRAMENT AS A CHARM

(Caes. Heist. vol. II, p. 170.)

I THINK it is less than two years now since a certain priest who doubted of the Sacrament of Christ's Body celebrated mass in the town of Wildenburg. As he was reciting the canon of the mass, with some hesitation concerning so marvellous a conversion of bread into Christ's Body, the Lord showed him raw flesh in the host. This was seen also by Widekind, a noble standing behind his back, who drew the priest aside after mass and enquired diligently what he had done or thought during the canon; he, therefore, terrified both by the vision and by the question, confessed and denied not how at that hour he had doubted of the sacrament. And each told the other how he had seen raw flesh in the host. This same Widekind had to wife the daughter of Siegfried of Runkel, a niece of the abbess of Rheindorf, who told me this vision last year. Wouldst thou also know what the Lord shows to priests of evil life, for that He is crucified by them? . . . A certain lecherous priest wooed a woman; and, unable to obtain her consent, he kept the most pure Body of the Lord in his mouth after mass, hoping that, if he thus kissed her, her will would be bent to his desire by the force of the Sacrament. But the Lord, (who complaineth through the mouth of the Prophet Zacharias, saying: "You crucify me daily, even the whole nation of you":)<sup>2</sup> thus hindered his evil doing. When he would fain have gone forth from the church door, he seemed to himself to grow so huge that he struck his head against the ceiling

<sup>1</sup> St Bernardino of Siena records with disapproval this lottery of Apostles for patron-saints (*Opera*, vol. I, p. 53): yet it was in this way that St Elizabeth of Hungary chose St John for her special Apostle (J. B. Mencken, *Scriptores*, II, col. 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Caesarius here misquotes Malachi iii, 9, with a side reference to Zachariah xii, 10: cf. the 27th anecdote of his eighth book.

## THE SACRAMENT AS A CHARM

of the sacred building. The wretched man was so startled that he drew the host from his mouth, and buried it, not knowing what he did, in a corner of the church.<sup>1</sup> But, fearing the swift vengeance of God, he confessed the sacrilege to a priest his familiar friend. So they went together to the place and threw back the dust, where they found not the appearance of bread, but the shape, though small, of a man hanging on the cross, fleshy and blood-stained. What was afterwards done with it, or what the priest did, I forget, for it is long since this was told me by Hermann our Cantor, to whom the story was fairly well-known. . . . ¶ *Novice*. If all priests heard such stories, and believed in them, I think that they would honour the Divine Sacraments more than they do now. ¶ *Monk*. It is somewhat pitiful that we men, for whose salvation this Sacrament was instituted, should be so lukewarm about it; while brute beasts, worms, and reptiles recognize in it their Creator. . . . A certain woman kept many bees, which throve not, but died in great numbers; and, as she sought everywhere for a remedy, it was told her that if she placed the Lord's Body among them, this plague would soon cease. She therefore went to church and, making as though she would communicate, took the Lord's Body, which she took from her mouth as soon as the priest had departed, and laid it in one of her hives. Mark the marvellous power of God! These little worms, recognizing the might of their Creator, built for their sweetest Guest, out of their sweetest honeycombs, a tiny chapel of marvellous workmanship, wherein they set up an altar of the same material and laid thereon this most holy Body: and God blessed their labours. In process of time the woman opened this hive, and was aware of the aforesaid chapel; whereupon she hastened and confessed to the priest all that she had done and seen. Then he took with him his parishioners and came to the hive, where they drove away the bees that hovered round and buzzed in praise of their Creator; and, marvelling at the little chapel with its walls and windows, roof and tower, door and altar, they brought back the Lord's Body with praise and glory to the church. For though God be marvellous in the saints, yet these His smallest

<sup>1</sup> Churches were very commonly unpaved at this date.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

creatures preached Him yet more marvellously. Yet, lest any presume to do this again, I will tell thee of a terrible thing which the mistress [of novices] at Sankt Nicolas Insel<sup>1</sup> told me last year. There was in that island a demoniac girl, a lay-woman, whom I also have seen there. A certain priest inquired of the devil that was in her,<sup>2</sup> why Hartdyfa of Cochem had been so cruelly tormented for so long a time; and the demon answered through the girl's mouth, "Why? she hath well and abundantly deserved it; for she sowed the Most High on her cabbage-beds." The priest understood not this saying, nor would the devil explain it further; he therefore sought out the woman Hartdyfa and told her of the devil's words, warning her not to deny if she understood them. She confessed her fault forthwith, saying, "I understand only too well; but I have never yet told it to any man. When I was young, and had got me a garden-plot to till, I took in a wandering woman one night as my guest: to whom when I complained of the ravage of my garden, telling how my cabbages were eaten up with caterpillars, she replied, 'I will teach thee a good remedy. Take thou the Lord's Body and crumble it up and sprinkle the crumbs over thy cabbages; so shall that plague cease forthwith.' I, wretched woman, caring more for my garden than for the Sacrament, having received the Lord's Body at Easter, took it from my mouth and used it as she had taught me, which did indeed turn to the comfort of my cabbages, but to mine own torment, as the devil hath said."

¶ *Novice.* That woman was more cruel than Pilate's minions, who spared the dead Jesus and would not break His bones.

¶ *Monk.* Wherefore even to this day she is punished for that enormous fault, and her tortures are unheard-of. Let those who turn God's sacraments to temporal profit—or, more abominable still, to witchcraft—mark well this chastisement, even though they fear not the guilt.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A convent of Augustinian nuns on an island in the Moselle.

<sup>2</sup> Many of Caesarius' anecdotes rest upon this medieval belief that mad folk had the spirit of prophecy, the devil speaking through their mouths.

<sup>3</sup> This eighth book of Caesarius contains many other tales of this abuse of sacraments for purposes of witchcraft; but the foregoing specimens will suffice for most readers.

## ORDEAL AND MIRACLE

### 42. ORDEAL AND MIRACLE

(Caes. Heist. vol. II, p. 243.)

DOM BERNARD of Lippe, who was once an abbot and is now a bishop in Livonia, is wont to tell a miracle contrary to this last. "I knew, (he said,) a fisher in the bishopric of Utrecht who had long lived incontinently with a certain woman; and, because his sin was too notorious, fearing one day to be accused at the synod then impending, he said within himself: 'What wilt thou now do, poor wretch? If thou art accused of incontinence in this synod and must confess, thou wilt forthwith be compelled to take her to wife; or if thou denyest it thou wilt be convicted by the ordeal of white-hot iron and be still more confounded.' So, coming forthwith to a priest (rather, as the event showed, from fear of punishment than from love of righteousness), he confessed his sin, asked counsel, and found it. 'If,' said the priest, 'thou hast a firm purpose never to sin again with her, then thou mayest carry the white-hot iron without further care and deny thy sin; for I hope that the virtue of confession will free thee.' And this he did, to the amazement of all who well knew his incontinence. Lo! here by God's power, as in former examples, the fire restrained its force against its own nature; and, as thou shalt hear later, it grew hot even more marvellously against its nature. To be brief, the man was absolved. Many days afterwards, as he rowed with another fisher at his work on the river, and the house of the aforesaid woman came in sight, then the other said unto him: 'I marvel greatly, and many marvel with me, wherefore the iron burned thee not at the synod, though thy sin was so notorious.' He, boasting unworthily of the grace that had been conferred on him (for he had already conceived the purpose of sinning again), smote the river-water with his hand and said: 'The fire hurt me no more than this water!' Mark the marvellous justice of God! He who had guarded the penitent in His mercy, punished now by a just and strange miracle the same man when he relapsed: for no sooner had he touched the water than it was to him as white-hot iron. He drew back his hand suddenly and cried aloud; but he left his skin in the water. Then, in



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tardy repentance, he told his comrade all that had befallen him."

Our fellow-monk Lambert was wont to tell a like miracle to this. A countryman who had a feud against another gave money to a certain wicked man of the Order of wandering Religious, (whereof there are many,) that he might burn the other's house; which this man, entering under the cloak of religion, set afire at a convenient time. Again this abandoned wretch, forgetful of the hospitality he had received, set fire to the same house for the same bribe, after that it had been rebuilt. The master, troubled at this double loss, accused all of whom he had any suspicion, but they purged themselves by the ordeal of white-hot iron. Again the burned house was rebuilt; and this iron which had been used for the ordeal was thrown into one corner of it. To be brief, that false religious vagrant came again, corrupted by his former covetousness, and was received with all kindness. He marked the aforesaid iron and asked what purpose it served: to which his host answered: "I know not who has twice set fire to my house; and, though I had suspicion of certain men, they have borne that iron at white-heat and yet were not burned." Then said the other: "The iron might be turned to some use": and lifting it up (as God would have it) he was so burned in the hand that he cried aloud and cast it down. When the master of the house saw this, he caught the incendiary by the cloak and cried: "Thou art the true culprit!" The man was taken before the judge, confessed his crime unwillingly, and was condemned to be broken upon the wheel.

## THE KNIGHT AND THE CRUCIFIX

In the earliest version of the following story, immortalized by Burne-Jones, the hero is St John Gualbert, founder of the Order of Vallombrosa, who died in 1073. For other forms see A. G. Little, *Liber Exemplorum* (1908), pp. 155-6: but this of Matthew Paris is perhaps the most vivid narrative of all. Matthew Paris, Monk of St Albans and Historiographer Royal to Henry III, is unquestionably the greatest of the English medieval chroniclers, and has few rivals in Europe during this period. He was a man of many and various accomplishments—diplomatist, mathematician, poet, theologian, and artist, though the best authorities ascribe to other hands nearly all the beautiful drawings which illustrate the MSS. of his works. Far more extracts would have been given here, but that a complete translation of his Chronicle, uninspired but otherwise satisfactory, has been published in Bohn's Antiquarian Library. He died in or about the year 1259.

### 43. THE KNIGHT AND THE CRUCIFIX

A.D. 1232. In the reign of the said King Richard [I], a certain English knight who dwelt in the New Forest, and had long been wont to hunt the King's deer by stealth, was caught one day with his stolen venison and banished by sentence of the King's court. For thus had this King, most merciful in time of peace, tempered the law of deerstealing; whereas under his predecessors all who were taken in this misdeed lost their eyes, their hands, or their feet, or suffered other nameless mutilations. But to the good King Richard such a sentence seemed too inhuman, that men made in God's image should stand in peril of life or limb for the sake of beasts which are by natural law common to all men; nay, he thought that in this he would himself be more than a beast. . . . The knight therefore was banished as aforesaid; and he, who had before rejoiced in choice delicacies, must needs beg his bread now among strangers with his wife and children. Coming therefore at length to himself, he thought to implore the King's mercy, that he might earn the restoration of his inheritance; wherefore, coming to the King in Normandy, he found him at early morn in a certain church, whither he was come to hear mass. Into which church he entered trembling, not daring to raise his eyes to the King, who, being one of the comeliest of men to see, was yet terrible to behold at such times. The knight therefore betook himself to the crucifix,

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before which he bowed again and again on his knees with bitter tears, beseeching that Crucified One with all humility that He, in His ineffable clemency, might mercifully restore him to the King's grace, and that he might recover his lost heritage. The King, seeing how earnestly the knight prayed, with what tears and unfeigned devotion, beheld in him a marvel worthy of record. For as often as the knight (whom he knew to be none of his own train) bowed his knees to adore that image, the crucifix for his part inclined his head and neck most humbly to his genuflections; which the King marvelled to see again and again, and was moved to admiration. When therefore the mass was ended, the King straightway summoned that knight to speak with him, and enquired closely who and whence he might be. To whom he answered trembling: "My lord, I am your liegeman, as were all my ancestors"; and told in order how he had been caught stealing the deer, and deprived of his inheritance, and banished with all his family. Then said the King, "Didst thou ever in thy life any good deed for reverence and honour of the Holy Cross?" Then the knight, casting carefully back in his memory, told the King what he had once done in such reverence. "My father," said he, "once divided a certain village with another knight, each possessing his moiety by inheritance. My father abounded in all riches; wherefore the other, ever poor and needy, was moved by envy to lie in wait and slay him. I therefore, being then a boy, when I was come of age and had been confirmed in the possession of mine heritage, purposed immoveably to slay that knight in revenge for my father's murder; but he was forewarned, and craftily kept himself for many years against the snares which I had carefully laid for him. At last, on a Good Friday, whereon Christ Jesus suffered the cross for the world's salvation, as I hastened to church for divine service, I saw mine enemy before me and bent upon the same purpose; wherefore I drew my sword and ran after him. But he, looking behind by chance and seeing how swiftly I hastened towards him, fled to a wayside cross; for he was broken with age and unable to defend himself. When therefore I had raised my sword and would have slain him while he embraced the arms of the cross, as I was



#### DEATH OF MATTHEW PARIS

From MS. Royal 14, chap. vii, fol. 218b; a portrait by a contemporary monk of St Albans. The dying man has a blanket thrown over his regulation *staminea*, or woollen shirt, and rests his elbow on a book inscribed, "The Book of the Chronicles of Matthew Paris." (J. Strutt, *Hor-da Angel Cynnan*, plate xxxv.)

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

even ready to scatter his brains on the earth, then he adjured me to spare his life, in His name Who hung that day on the tree for the whole world's salvation; vowing the while and solemnly promising that he would endow a chaplaincy for ever to sing funeral masses for the soul of my father whom he had slain. The sight of this weeping greybeard stirred my bowels; wherefore, overcome with pity, I returned my sword to its sheath and forbore to touch him. Thus then, for love and reverence for that life-bringing cross, I pardoned my father's murderer." Then the King answered and said, "And thou didst wisely: for now hath the Crucified made thee a full return." Then, calling the bishops and barons who were there present, he revealed to all men the vision that he had seen: to wit, how the crucifix had humbly bent his head and neck at each genuflection of the knight. Then, calling forthwith for his Chancellor, he bade him send letters patent to the Sheriff whom that knight should name, commanding him, as soon as he should have read them, to restore all his lands as fully as he had received them when the knight had been banished; and (as we believe) this merciful act of pious King Richard, with other deeds of his, freed him from the peril of damnation and released him the sooner from torment.

## NORMAN PARISH PRIESTS

Odo Rigaldi (Eudes Rigaud) was of noble birth; he joined the Franciscans in 1236 and studied at their convent in Paris, where he became Professor of Theology in 1242. In 1248 he was chosen Archbishop of Rouen, a dignity which he accepted only after much hesitation. He earned the personal friendship of St Louis, whom he accompanied on his second Crusade (1269) and who named him one of his executors. Contemporary anecdotes show him not only as a saint but also as a wit. A clerical buffoon once ventured to ask him across the table, "What is the difference, my lord, betwixt *Rigaud* and *Ribaud* [rascal]?" "Only this board's breadth," replied the Archbishop. In 1274 he was one of the three great churchmen chosen by Gregory X to preside at the Ecumenical Council of Lyons, one of his colleagues being his fellow-Franciscan St Bonaventura. He died in 1275. Odo's work in his own diocese earned him the title of *The Model of Good Life*; he has left a voluminous diary of the years 1248-1269 which is the most interesting of all existing episcopal registers, and from which, even if all other documents had perished, we could reconstitute pretty exactly the inner history of a medieval diocese. See *St Francis to Dante*, pp. 289 ff. and 428 ff. (second edition), where among other data I give a full translation of his first visitation of a rural deanery. I give here his report on the next six deaneries, containing 217 parishes and one chapelry—that is, as many as small modern dioceses like Llandaff (225) or St Asaph (204), and half as many as Lichfield (456). The reports give of course only the seamy side; but I omit all Odo's threats and disciplinary measures, and also his reports on habitual incontinents, who amounted to about 15 in every 100 parishes. With his monastic visitations I hope to deal fully in another book.

### 44. NORMAN PARISH PRIESTS

JAN. 16, 1248-9. *Deanery of Bures*. The priest of Pomerevalle is in evil repute and still ill-famed of tavern-haunting; he confesseth not to the Penitentiary, and is drunken. *Item*, William, priest of Mesnières, is ill-famed of trading, and keepeth farms to which he goeth oftentimes, so that divine service is diminished in his church. *Item*, the priest of Lortiey weareth his cassock<sup>1</sup> but seldom, and confesseth not to the Penitentiary, and is drunken. *Item*, the priest of Aulayge is

<sup>1</sup> Church synods attempted constantly but vainly to compel the clergy to wear decent attire—i.e. a *capa clausa*, or closed cassock, reaching at least below the knees, of neither red nor green, which were specially worldly colours. Some ten years before this date, the Council of Rouen fulminated afresh against clerics who neglected their tonsure, and who went about in tabards or jackets: the offending garments were to be confiscated and given to leper-houses. Odo, strict disciplinarian as he was, shows no sign of having carried this rule into practice: the Rouen synods of 1279 and 1313 were compelled to deal again with the same matter.

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grievously ill-noted of drunkenness and tavern-haunting. *Item*, we found that a certain chaplain of Meulers sang a certain mass for hire on Christmas Eve.

Jan. 18. *Deanery of Aumale*. The priest of Morville is ill-famed of drunkenness and haunteth taverns, *item* of exacting money for the marriage-benediction. *Item*, Peter, priest of St Valery, hireth land to sow. Robert de Poys, priest, is ill-famed of trading; he hath promised us to desist.

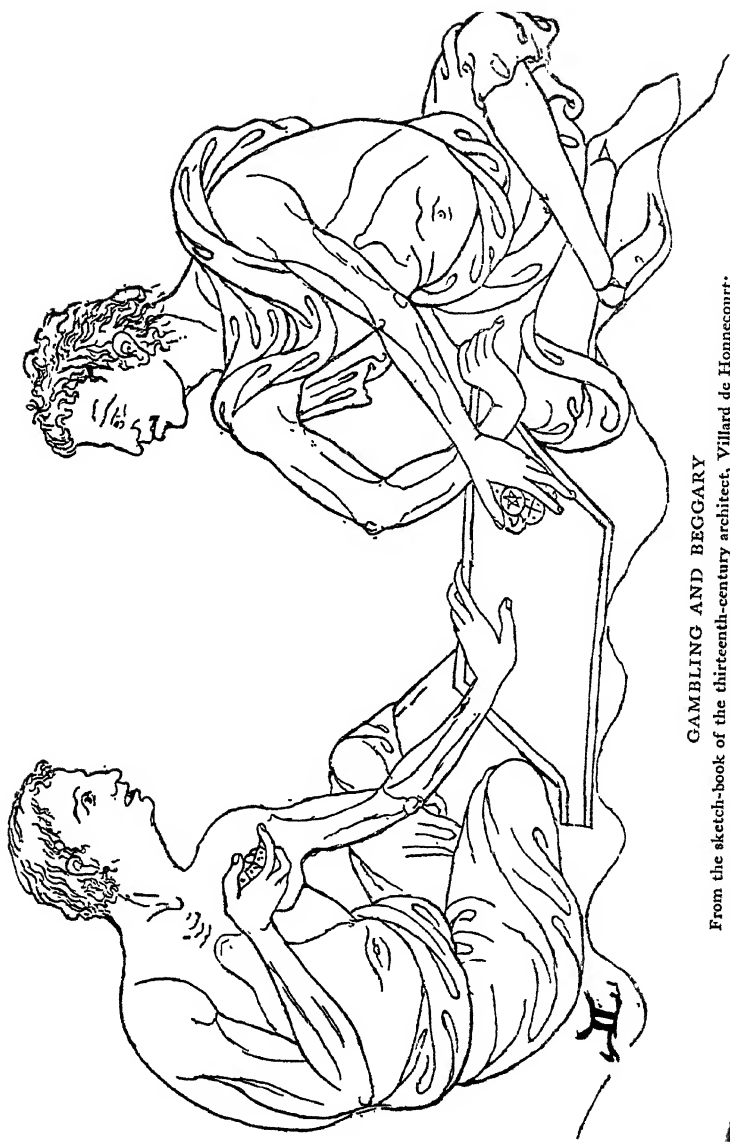
Jan. 19. *Deanery of Foucarmont*. We found the priest of Neuilly ill-famed of trading, and ill-treating his father who is the patron of his benefice; and he fought bodily with drawn sword against a certain knight, with hue and cry and the help of his kinsfolk and friends. *Item*, the priest of Bazinval haunteth taverns. *Item*, the priest of Vieux-Rouen goeth about with a sword at his side and in dishonest garb. *Item*, the priest of Bouafles weareth no cassock and selleth his corn at a dearer price on account of a certain day.<sup>1</sup> *Item*, the priest of Hamies is a leper, as it is thought. *Item*, the priest of Ecouis is a dicer and a player of quoits;<sup>2</sup> he refused to take the pledged faith of espousal from a man, because he had not restored a legacy of his father; he haunteth taverns. *Item*, the priest of Petra hath celebrated mass, though suspended from his functions.<sup>3</sup> *Item*, the priest of St Remy is ill-famed of drunkenness, weareth no cassock, playeth at dice, haunteth the tavern and is there oftentimes beaten.<sup>4</sup> *Item*, the priest of Gilemerville dwelleth not in his parish, as he should, nor weareth the

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* makes usurious bargains out of other men's necessities, which rendered him *ipso facto* excommunicate: see Busch. in vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> Many most respectable games enjoyed an evil reputation in the Middle Ages on account of the gambling and quarrels which accompanied them. With regard to dicing, Odo's friend St Louis discouraged it even among the laity: in this same year 1248 Joinville tells us (§ 405), "One day he asked what the Count of Anjou was doing; and they told him he was playing at tables with my Lord Walter of Nemours. And he went thither tottering, for he was weak by reason of sickness; and he took the dice and the tables, and threw them into the sea; and he was very wroth with his brother because he had so soon taken to playing at dice. But my Lord Walter came off best, for he threw all the moneys on the table into his own lap—and they were very many—and carried them away."

<sup>3</sup> This again entailed excommunication *ipso facto*: see the first extract from St Bonaventura, no. 61 of this volume.

<sup>4</sup> *Et ibi multitudiēciens verberatur*. It is very probable that this is a Gallicism meaning simply that he often fights there.



# GAMBLING AND BEGGARY

From the sketch-book of the thirteenth-century architect, Villard de Honnecourt.



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

cassock, and sometimes he loseth his garments in taverns.<sup>1</sup> *Item*, Robert, priest of Campneuseville, hath no cassock. *Item*, the priest of St Martin du Bois is litigious and a wanderer (*vagabundus*). *Item*, the priest of Pierrepont is drunken, and playeth at dice and quoits. *Item*, Master Walter, priest of Grandcourt, is ill-famed of overmuch drinking. *Item*, from Robert, priest of St Mary's church at Mortemer, (whom we found grievously ill-famed of misbehaviour, litigiousness, and tavern-haunting,) we have the letters here below.<sup>2</sup> *Item*, the priest of Realcamp, corrected by the Archdeacon, had promised that in case of relapse he would hold his benefice as resigned *ipso facto*, and hath since relapsed, even as he sometimes also loseth his garments in taverns. We have denounced the aforesaid priest as *ipso facto* deprived of the aforesaid church. *Item*, we found that the priest of Mesnil-David, oftentimes corrected by the Archdeacon, hath relapsed, and it is said that he hath celebrated in spite of suspension, wherefore we have bidden him purge himself in form of law from these accusations, or we would proceed to an inquisition against him.<sup>3</sup> To which he answered that he would take counsel hereupon: we therefore have assigned him a day to answer these things.

Jan. 20. *Deanery of Neufchâtel*. Adam, priest of Neuilly, hath been corrected for drunkenness by the Archdeacon. *Item*, the priest of Sommery resideth not in his parish as he should, and rideth abroad like a vagabond. *Item*, Thomas, priest of Mesnil-Mauger, is said to buy and sell horses and to trade in other ways. *Item*, the priest of Fosse cometh not to [ruri-

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* at dice. Cf. Caes. Heist. *Dial.* vol. iv, p. 44, and the two parodies of Church Services in *Carmina Burana*, nos. 189, 196; and again the songs 193, 195: "When a man hath drunk his tunic. Let him dice away his shirt!" This is illustrated in the sketch-book of Villard de Honnecourt, from which the accompanying illustration is facsimiled: another similar picture may be found in Wright's *Homes of Other Days*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> From the worst sinners—for these priests of Mortemer and Realcamp were habitually unchaste also—Odo exacted letters promissory that they would resign their benefices in case of relapse.

<sup>3</sup> The allusion is here to the process called *compurgation*. A clerk accused in the bishop's court could clear himself by bringing a certain number of fellow-clergy (or sometimes, of neighbours) to swear with him to their belief in his innocence. This procedure was notoriously a great temptation to perjury: see Rashdall, *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, vol. II, pp. 410, 417, and *From St Francis to Dante* (second edition), p. 430.

## NORMAN PARISH PRIESTS

decanal] chapters, nor to the synod. *Item*, Master Robert de Houssaye, parson of Conteville, is ill-famed of drunkenness and dilapidation [of church property]; he vexeth folk and dwelleth not in his parish. *Item*, the priest of Malacopula frequenteth assizes and lay courts. *Item*, the priest of Lucy exacteth from each woman 13 pence; even though the child die before the churching, he will not church the mother until she pay 13 pence. *Item*, the priest of Haucourt buyeth and holdeth land on farm from the abbess of Buieval. The priest of Nogent hath no cassock. The priest of Louvechamp keepeth hunting hounds. *Item*, the priests of Salicosa Mara and Beaubec have no cassocks.

Jan. 22. *Deanery of Eu*. We found the priest of Panliu ill-famed of drunkenness; he selleth his wine and maketh his parishioners drunken. The priest of Auberville resideth not in his parish as he should. The [rural] Dean is ill-famed of exacting money, and it is said that he had forty shillings from the priest of Essigny for dealing gently with him in his incontinence. The prior of Criel is ill-famed of trading: he selleth rams. The priest of St Aignan is dishonestly dressed; *item*, the priest of Berneval is a trader in cider, corn, and salt. *Item*, the priest of Bouville selleth wine, as it is said.

Jan. 27. *Deanery of Envermeu*. Renier, priest of Jonquières, is ill-famed of drunkenness; so also William and Ralph, priests of Bailly, who have been corrected by the Archdeacon. *Item*, Robert, priest of Derchigny, of trading and taking farms. *Item*, the priest of St Sulpice is drunken; *item*, the priest of Sauchay-in-the-Forest celebrates though suspended; *item*, in that parish are wakes every Saturday; we enjoined that the church should be closed at nightfall, and no man should hold wakes there.<sup>1</sup> *Item*, the priest of Sauchay by

<sup>1</sup> There were repeated attempts to put down these wakes in England, from at least as early as 1240 to the verge of the Reformation: see Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. i, p. 675; vol. ii, p. 706; vol. iii, pp. 68, 845; Grosseteste, *Epistolae*, p. 74. Abp. Thoresby of York, for instance, ordained "since it often cometh to pass that folk assemble in the churches on the eves of holidays, who ought there to busy themselves in divine worship, or in praying for souls at the obsequies of the dead, yet who, turning to a reprobate mind, are intent upon noxious games and vanities, and sometimes worse still, grievously offending God and His saints whom they feign to honour, and making the house of mourning and funeral-prayer into a house

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

the Sea is drunken; so also is the priest of St Mary at Envermeu. *Item*, the priest of St Martin-en-Campagne, of selling hemp; *item*, the priest of Belleville hath ships on the sea, and haunteth taverns. *Item*, Vinquenel, chaplain of Bracquemont, is drunken. *Item*, the priest of Martin-Eglise is drunken; he hath twice been corrected and hath sworn to the Archdeacon that, if he relapsed, he would take his benefice as resigned. *Item*, the chaplain of Douvrend is ill-famed of drunkenness, and the priest of St Laurent-le-Petit of selling his sacraments. *Item*, the priest of Etrun, of trading. *Item*, the priest of Bailleul singeth not his vespers in the church.

Etienne de Bourbon is one of the many distinguished mission-preachers who arose among the early Friars. Born about 1195, he was studying at Paris when the Dominicans first arrived there. He joined the Order about 1223, preached in many places and with great effect for the crusades and against the heretics, and was appointed Inquisitor shortly after 1235. His active career seems to have ended in 1249; he died about 1261, leaving still incomplete his Preachers' Manual, of which its modern editor justly says: "Whoever wishes to grasp the moral and mental state of St Louis's time, and all that intimate side of medieval society towards which modern learning seems most willingly to turn, must henceforth study this collection of anecdotes" (*Anecdotes Historiques, etc., d'Etienne de Bourbon*, ed. by A. Lecoy de la Marche for the Société de L'Histoire de France, 1877, p. iii). Very many of the tales are taken from Etienne's personal experiences; but even those which are patently legendary throw much light on the ideas of the age.

### 45. PAUPER FUNERALS

(Bourb. p. 384.)

A SECOND evil thing to sell is the burial of the dead; for he who selleth it selleth their rest, [*requiem*] so far as the body is concerned. To the priest who for such a man sings Mass and the *Requiem eternam*, the Lord may say: "Rest he shall not have, for he hath sold it for money." . . . In reproof of those men's wickedness who demand money for burials, Master Jacques de Vitry used to tell how a poor man in Lorraine, of laughter and excess, to the most grievous peril of their own souls; therefore we strictly forbid that any who come to these wakes or obsequies, especially within the aforesaid churches, should make or in any way practise wrestlings or foul sports [*turpitudines*], or anything else tending to error or sin."

## PAUPER FUNERALS

James by name, lost his mother, and his priest would not bury her unless he would give money, which indeed he had not. He therefore put his mother's corpse in a sack and carried it to the priest's house, laying her on his bed and saying that in this sack he had brought for a pledge the linen and the balls of yarn which she had made. The priest felt her head and, taking it for a great ball of yarn, "Now" (quoth he) "I have a good pledge." So he went straightway to the poor man's house with his cross and his parishioners, to fetch the body. Then said the other, "You need not labour to carry her hence; for she lieth already in your house and on your bed; it is she who lieth in the sack for a pledge; you may now lay her in earth or in salt as it liketh you best."

Another man was poor in worldly goods but rich in children, one of whom died. When therefore his priest would not bury the child without money, which the poor man had not, then he brought his son's body in a sack to Roche-Scise, Archbishop Regnaud's palace of Lyon, and told the porter that it was a present of venison which he brought to his lord. Then, when he had been admitted and brought before the Archbishop, he laid the child down at his feet and declared the whole matter. The Archbishop therefore gave the boy honourable burial; after which, calling the priest, "Pay me" (quoth he) "my fee as your Vicar"; for which he forced him to pay a great sum.

## 46. UNSUCCESSFUL MAGIC

(Bourb. p. 317.)

WHILE I was a student at Paris, one Christmas Eve when our companions were at Vespers, a certain most noted thief entered our hostel, and, opening the chamber of one of our fellows, carried off many volumes of law-books. The scholar would have studied in his books after the feast; and, finding them not, he hastened to the wizards, of whom many failed him, but one wrought as follows. Adjuring his demons and holding a sword, he made the boy gaze upon the blade; and he, after many things there seen, beheld at last by a succession of many visions how his books were stolen by one of our fellows,

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

his own cousin, whom he thought the most upright of our fellowship; whom the possessor of the books slandered not only among the scholars but also among his friends, accusing him that he had stolen them. Meanwhile the aforesaid thief stole other things and was detected, whereupon he fled to a certain church where he lay in the belfry, and, having been duly examined, confessed all that he had stolen, and where, and what he had done with his thefts. When therefore certain scholars who lodged hard by our hostel had found by his means a mantle which they had lost and he had stolen, then he who had lost his books could scarce rest until he had gone to enquire of this thief; who answered and told him when and where he had taken his books, and the Jew's house where he had pledged them, where also my friend found them. This I have told that ye may clearly mark the falsehood of those demons who showed the vision in the sword-blade in order that they might slander that good man and break the bonds of charity between those kinsfolk, and bring the man who believed in them to eternal perdition, both him and his.

### 47. ICONOCLASTIC USURERS

(Bourb. p. 365.)

It befel at Dijon, about the year 1240, that a certain usurer would have celebrated his wedding with much rejoicing; and, having been led with instruments of music to the parish church of the blessed Virgin, and standing now under the church portal that his bride might give her consent and the marriage be ratified according to custom by the promise "I do," and so the wedding might be solemnized in the church by the singing of mass and other ceremonies—while this was there being done, I say, and the bride and bridegroom should have been led with joy into the church, a certain usurer carved in stone upon the portal above, whom a carven devil was bearing to hell, fell with his money-bag upon the head of this living usurer who should have been married, and crushed and slew him; so that the wedding was turned to mourning, and their joy to lamentation, and the living man was thus shut out by the stone image

## ICONOCLASTIC USURERS

from that entrance into church, and those sacraments, from which the priests not only did not exclude him but would have led him in.<sup>1</sup> Then the usurers, or other citizens, by dint of bribes, procured the destruction of the other graven images which stood without, on the forefront of the said portal, which I myself have seen there broken away, lest a like fate might befall them or others under like circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

### 48. THE WISE CONFESSOR

(Bourb. p. 162.)

HERE let us consider what should be the nature of true and salutary confession. . . . I have heard how a priest in the diocese of Reims had a certain woman in his parish whom he knew to be a grievous sinner, but in secret. When therefore she was justifying herself before him, nor could he press from her any confession of sin, then he shut the screened enclosure wherein she was, saying that God had given him a most precious relic such as had never been found of any woman save only the Mother of God, who was sinless! Then, ringing the bells, he called together his parishioners and told them how he would set her in a silver shrine; whereby she was brought to confusion, and confessed many heinous sins.

### 49. THE ANATOMY OF HERESY

(Bourb. p. 289.)

HERETICS are refuse and debased, and therefore they may not return to their former state but by a miracle of God, as dross may not turn to silver, nor dregs to wine. In the county of the Albigenes a heretic argued with a Catholic that his own sect was better than the faith of the Roman Church, since our

<sup>1</sup> By strict church law, the sacraments should have been refused to an impenitent usurer; but Etienne agrees with all others in complaining that the golden key opened this door also.

<sup>2</sup> Etienne tells the same story more briefly on p. 60, where he adds that this destruction was still fresh when he saw it, and that the Bishop of Cambrai held forth about it on the spot itself.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Catholics sometimes turned to heretics, but never from heretic to Catholic. To whom the Catholic answered that this was rather a sign of their utter depravity and corruption, since excellent wine may turn to vinegar, but never contrariwise, especially when it is much corrupted; and corn may turn to tares or weeds, but never back again.

### 50. THE IRISHMAN AND THE DEVIL

(Bourb. p. 157.)

WHILE two Friars Preachers wandered amidst the mountains of Ireland, and had lost their way, they saw hard by a little man to whom they cried. He fled from them; but they followed after him and caught him in a narrow pass betwixt the hills. Then they asked him their way, but he could scarce answer them; wherefore, when they had long insisted to know who he might be, he told them how for thirty years he had served the demons who appeared unto him in divers wickednesses, and had done them homage to perform their bidding; in sign whereof he showed them a seal impressed upon his hand, and inscribed with the letters of that homage. The friars had much ado to persuade him to come with them to the town; but when they were come thither, and one of them had preached on the abominableness of sin and on God's mercy towards the penitent, that man proclaimed his own guilt before the congregation; and, having made his confession with tears to the friar, he found the devil's seal erased from his hand. After a few days he returned, comforted and instructed, to his accustomed forest, that he might bear thence his few possessions. Here he met that same demon to whom he had done homage, scouring the mountains with a multitude of fellow-demons, and black horses and hounds. The devil asked him whether he had seen such and such a man, his runaway slave whom he had lost. At length, therefore, the man asked the demons whether they knew him not; and they said "No." "Yea," said he, "for I am the man whom ye seek!" whereupon they looked upon his hand and, finding not the seal, told him that he lied, not bearing the sign of his homage; and,

## THE IRISHMAN AND THE DEVIL

believing themselves to be mocked of him, they departed. The man came back rejoicing to the friars, and abode with them. This was told me by an Irish friar who had come to the lord Pope's court at Lyons.

### 51. PILGRIMS' DISORDERS

(Bourb. p. 167.)

PILGRIMS should be joyful (as the Psalmist saith, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye just") that they may sing of God, as the Germans do, and not of other vanities and foul things, as the Jews who had gone forth from Babylon, and of whom it is written that they spake in the speech of Azotus [2 Esdras xiii, 24]. Now *Azotus* signifieth *fire*. So do those pilgrims also who, when they visit holy places, sing lecherous lays whereby they inflame the hearts of such as hear them and kindle the fire of lechery; and sometimes they themselves are burned by God's hand with material flames or hell-fire, as those most sacrilegious persons who tread down the bodies of holy Christian folk in the churchyards, where they dance on Saints' eves and kindle the living temples of God with the fire of lechery, flocking to the churches on Saints' days and eves and holding dances and hindering the service of God and His saints.<sup>1</sup> It came to pass in the diocese of Elne that, when a certain preacher had preached in that country and had straitly forbidden this holding of dances in churches and on the vigils of saints, whereas in one of the parishes certain young folk were wont to come and ride upon a wooden horse, and to dance masked and disguised in the church and through the churchyard on the vigil of the dedication-day of that church—whereas, I say, the men had left their dances by reason of the words of that preacher and the prohibition of their priest,

<sup>1</sup> All dances, almost without exception, were anathema to the medieval moralists. Thoroughly characteristic is the following quotation from Cardinal Jacques de Vitry given by Lecoy on p. 162. The dancers joined hands and sang as they tripped round, led by one who gave time and tune to the rest, and of whom the Cardinal writes: "As the cow which goeth before the herd hath a bell at her neck; so likewise the woman who leadeth the song and the dance hath as it were the devil's bell bound to hers."



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

a certain youth came to his fellow and invited him to the accustomed sport. The other refused to play, telling how the priest and the preacher had forbidden it; but the youth harnessed himself, saying that the man should be accursed who should abandon the wonted sport on account of their prohibition. When therefore the aforesaid youth pranced upon his wooden horse into the church, while the congregation were keeping their vigils in peace and prayer, then on the very threshold of the sanctuary a fire caught him by the feet and utterly consumed him, horse and man. No man in that church, whether kinsman or friend, could bring him the least help to quench those flames that burned before their eyes; wherefore at length the whole congregation, dismayed by this judgment from heaven, left the church and fled to the priest's house. He arose and came to the church, where he found the youth already almost utterly consumed; from whose body rose so great a flame that it seemed to issue forth from the windows of the spire. This I heard in the parish itself, not long after the event, from the chaplain and the youth's parents and other parishioners.

### 52. THE SIN OF DANCING<sup>1</sup>

(Bourb. p. 397.)

WE should specially avoid the places wherein dances take place, and the dances themselves. The devil is the inventor and governor and disposer of dances and dancers. I have heard how a certain holy man saw the devil, under the form of a little Ethiopian, standing over a woman who led the dance, and leading her round at his will, and leaping upon her head. . . . The inventor of these things is Satan, leading vain folk who are like unto thistledown wafted on the blast, or the dust which the wind lifteth from the face of the earth, or clouds without water, which are carried about by winds.

Moreover, God suffereth him sometimes to vex men with a sudden tempest for this sin of dancing, and to wreak the fury

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to exaggerate the unanimity with which medieval theologians condemn dancing as immoral, except under exceptional circumstances.

## THE SIN OF DANCING

of his wrath upon them. I have heard from Brother Philip, first prior of our convent at Reims, of a certain church in the diocese of Soissons wherein dances had been made. While the priest sang mass one morning in that church, there arose suddenly a great whirlwind and uproar, and a thunderbolt fell upon the church, consuming the altar-cloth and slaying many of the congregation, but leaving the priest and the host untouched; moreover it overthrew a mill that was there and slew four men. One who fled thence saw many demons springing and leaping after the fashion of dancers over a certain ditch; by whom he was beaten to death and scarce escaped by making the sign of the cross, whereat they fled in indignation and terror. One of the demons in his wrath bit a mighty stone in the wall and carried away a great part in his mouth, leaving the marks of his teeth on the stone, as the men of that place showed to Brother Philip in testimony of the fact; and the aforesaid man who had been beaten by the demons told the tale in the presence of Master Jean des Vignes, who was in those days the greatest clerk and preacher in France.

### 53. A BISHOP AND HIS FLOCK

(Bourb. p. 268.)

SUCH as defile or violate holy places, or do injury to them . . . are accursed, for they incur the sentence of anathema, which is the greatest of ecclesiastical penalties. . . . Yet many fear more to be hurt in their purses, though it were but a small fine, than to be smitten with this sword fatal both to body and soul—for it destroyeth both and consumeth to all eternity. I have heard how a certain Bishop of Grenoble commanded his priests, when they came to the synod, to come decently in stole and alb or surplice; which they scorned to obey. Then he commanded it under pain of suspension; yet even thus they obeyed not; then he made his hand yet heavier, proclaiming at the next synod that they should come under pain of excommunication; yet few obeyed even then. Then said the Bishop: "Come to-morrow as I have bidden, under pain of five shillings." Then all the clergy, fearing this fine aforesaid,

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

sought out albs and surplices, or even hired them; so that all came attired as they had been bidden. Wherefore the Bishop rebuked them in that synod, showing plainly how they feared more to lose a little money than to lose their souls.

### 54. SAINT GREYHOUND

(Bourb. p. 325.)

DISHONOURABLE to God are all superstitions which attribute divine honours to the demons, or to any other creature, as idolatry doth, and as those wretched witches do who seek health by adoring elder-trees<sup>1</sup> or offering to them, in contempt of the churches and the relics of saints, by carrying their children thither or to ant-hills or to other places for health's sake. So they wrought lately in the diocese of Lyons, where I preached against witchcraft and heard confessions, and many women confessed that they had taken their children to St Guinefort. Whereof I enquired, supposing him to be some true saint; and at last I heard that he was a certain greyhound who came thus by his death.

In the diocese of Lyons, near the nuns' town called Ville-neuve, on the lands of the lord de Villars, was a certain castle whereof the lord had one little boy by his wife. One day that he and his lady and the nurse had gone forth, leaving the child alone in his cradle, then a vast serpent glided into the house and moved towards the child. The hound, seeing this, followed him in all haste even beneath the cradle, which they overturned in their struggles; for the dog gnawed upon the serpent, which strove to defend itself and bit him in turn; yet at last the dog slew it and cast it far from the child; after which he stood then by the bloody cradle and the bloodstained earth, with his own head and jaws all bloody, for the serpent had dealt roughly with him. Hereupon the nurse came in; and at this sight, believing that the hound had slain and devoured the child, she cried aloud in lamentation; hearing which the mother hastened to the spot, and saw, and believed, and cried likewise. The Knight also came and believed the same; where-

<sup>1</sup> The text has *sambucas*, but *sambucus* seems to give a better sense.

## SAINT GREYHOUND

fore, drawing his sword, he slew the hound. Then, coming to the child, they found him unhurt and softly sleeping; and seeking further, they found the dead serpent all torn to pieces by the hound's teeth. Wherefore, recognizing the truth, and grieving that they had so unjustly slain this hound which had done them so great a kindness, they cast him into a well hard by the castle gate, and cast an immense heap of stones over him, and planted trees by the spot as a memorial of his deed.

But God so willed that this castle should be destroyed, and the land made desert and left without inhabitants. Wherefore the country folk, hearing of that dog's prowess, and how he had lost his guiltless life for a deed that deserved so great a reward, flocked to that place and honoured the hound as a martyr, praying to him for their sicknesses and necessities; all which came to pass at the instigation of the Devil, who oftentimes deluded them there, that he might thus lead men into error. More especially the women who had weak or sickly children were wont to bring them to that spot; and they used to take an old woman from a town that lay a league distant, who would teach them the due rites of offering to the demons and calling upon their name, and would guide them to that place. When they were come thither, they offered salt with certain other oblations, and hung the child's clothes upon the bushes around, and thrust a needle into the wood which grew over the spot, and thrust the naked child through a hole that was betwixt two tree-trunks; the mother standing on one side to hold him and casting him nine times into the hands of the hag who stood on the other side, calling with demoniacal invocations upon the hobgoblins which haunted that forest of Rimita, and beseeching them to take the child (who, as they said, belonged to the fiends), and bring back their own child which these had carried off, fat and well-liking and safe and sound. After which these murderous mothers<sup>1</sup> would take the child and lay him naked at the foot of the tree upon the straw of his cradle; and, taking two candles an inch long, they lighted them at both ends from a fire which they had brought thither, and fixed them upon the trunk overhead. Then they would

<sup>1</sup> This is evidently what Etienne means by his "*hoc facto, accipiebant matricide puerum, etc., etc.*"

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

withdraw so far that the candles might burn out and that they themselves might neither see nor hear the wailing babe; and thus these white-hot<sup>1</sup> candles would oftentimes burn the children alive, as we found there in certain cases. Moreover one woman told me how, when she had called upon the hobgoblins and was withdrawing from the spot, she saw a wolf come forth from the forest towards the child, whom he would have devoured (or a devil in wolf's form, as she said), if her motherly love had not driven her to prevent him. If therefore, returning to the child, they found him still living, then they would take him to a stream of rushing water hard by, called Chalaronne, wherein nine times they plunged that child, who indeed must needs have the toughest of bowels to escape this ordeal, or at least not to die soon afterwards. Wherefore we went to that place, and called together the folk of that country, and preached against this custom. We caused the dead hound to be dug up, and the grove to be cut down and burned together with the dog's bones; and we persuaded the lords of that country to issue an edict threatening confiscation and public sale against all who should thenceforth resort to that same place for this purpose.<sup>2</sup>

### 55. BOY ARCHDEACONS

(Bourb. p. 352.)

A CERTAIN bishop, having received a gift of a basket of pears, asked of them who sat at meat with him, to whose custody he should commit them. His young nephew, to whom he had even then committed an archdeaconry, answered and said, "I will keep the pears." To whom his uncle answered, "Thou rascal! ill wouldest thou keep them!" Then said a certain honest man who was there present, "O wretch! How hast thou dared to commit an archdeaconry of so many souls to this youth, to whom thou daredst not commit a basket of pears?" As a common proverb hath it, "The wolf waxeth fat on evil guardianship."

<sup>1</sup> So the text has it, *candentes*; but Etienne probably wrote *cadentes*, "falling."

<sup>2</sup> The editor notes that the worship of St Guinefort is still said to survive among the women of the district round Romans, though without these cruelties (for which compare Extract 14). The legend is of course a variant of that of Gelert, which can be traced to the east.

## A CATHEDRAL VISITATION

I give here a typical series of documents which throw instructive sidelights on church life in the Middle Ages. The reports given here are neither the best nor the worst of their kind. The Rouen record is the earliest known to me, and that of York the latest; the Exeter visitations are, as human documents, perhaps the most vivid of all that have survived. Others almost equally interesting may be found not only in the Rouen, Exeter, and York volumes here quoted, but also in the *Visitations of Southwell* (Camden Soc.), *Ripon Chapter Acts* (Surtees Soc.), *Beverley Chapter Act Book* (*Ib.*), and several episcopal registers. Archbishop Odo Rigaldi of Rouen was one of the greatest reforming prelates of the Middle Ages, and Grandisson of Exeter one of the most energetic English bishops of the fourteenth century.

### 56. A CATHEDRAL VISITATION

ROUEN CATHEDRAL. (19 March 1248, *Regestrum Visitationum Odonis Rigaldi*, ed. Bonnin, p. 35.)

WE visited the Chapter of Rouen, and found that they talk in choir contrary to rule.<sup>1</sup> The clergy wander about the church, and talk in the church with women, during the celebration of divine service. The statute regarding the entrance [of lay folk] into the choir is not kept. The psalms are run through too rapidly, without due pauses. The statute concerning going out at the Office of the Dead is not kept. In begging leave to go forth, they give no reason for so going. Moreover, the clergy leave the choir without reason, before the end of the service already begun; and, to be brief, many other of the statutes written on the board in the vestry are not kept. The chapter revenues are mismanaged [*male tractantur*].

With regard to the clergy themselves, we found that Master Michael de Bercy is ill-famed of incontinence; *item*, Sir Benedict, of incontinence; *item*, Master William de Salemonville of incontinence, theft, and manslaughter; *item*, master John de St-Lô, of incontinence. *Item*, master Alan, of tavern-haunting, drunkenness, and dicing. *Item*, Peter de Auleige, of trading.

<sup>1</sup> Great churches had generally special statutes against talking among the ministers during divine service: sometimes, however, the prohibition extends only to *too distant* conversations. At the collegiate church of Mortagne, for instance, it was forbidden to talk as far off as to the third stall, but the Cathedral statutes of Meaux (A.D. 1240) are more indulgent: "Let none speak in choir loud enough to be heard from one stall so far as to the fourth stall following in the same row." (See p. 233 of this *Regestrum*, and note 2.)

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Master John Bordez is ill-famed of trading; and it is said that he giveth out his money to merchants, to share in their gain.<sup>1</sup> Of our own free will we have denounced these persons aforesaid to the Archdeacons of Greater and Lesser Calais; and the Chapter is bound to correct these offences through the aforesaid archdeacons, or through other officials, before the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin [Aug. 15]; otherwise (we said), we ourselves would forthwith set our hands on the business, as we have notified to them by letter; and it is for them to let us know how the corrections have been made.

### 57. ANOTHER

EXETER CATHEDRAL. 15 October 1330. (Mandate from Bishop Grandisson to the Dean and Subdean: *Register of John de Grandisson*, ed. Hingeston-Randolph, p. 586.)

WE have learned from the lips of men worthy of credit, not without grave displeasure, that certain Vicars and other Ministers of our Cathedral Church—to the offence of God and the notable hindrance of divine service and their own damnation and the scandal of our Cathedral Church aforesaid—fear not to exercise irreverently and damnably certain disorders, laughings, gigglings, and other breaches of discipline, during the solemn services of the church; which is shameful to relate and horrible to hear. To specify some out of many cases, those who stand at the upper stalls in the choir, and have lights within their reach at mattins, knowingly and purposely throw drippings or snuffings from the candles upon the heads or the hair of such as stand at the lower stalls, with the purpose of exciting laughter and perhaps of generating discord, or at least rancour of heart and silent hatred among the ministers (which God forbend!), at the instigation of the enemy of mankind, who (as we find by experience) knoweth and striveth to create the greatest evils not from unlawful or greater occasions only, but even from the least and most lawful. *Item*, whereas some ministers do sometimes (and, as we grieve to say, too often)

<sup>1</sup> Clerical trading was of course forbidden in any case, but in this case there was usury, and therefore mortal sin.

## CATHEDRAL VISITATIONS

commit plain faults in singing or reading incorrectly, then others who know better, (and who should rather have compassion on the ignorant and bewail the defects of their brethren,) break out, in the hearing of many, into this speech of imprecation and derision in the vulgar tongue: "Cursed be he who told the last lie!"<sup>1</sup> *Item*, some whose heart is in the market-place, street, or bed, though their body be in the choir, seeking for their own part to hasten through God's work negligently and fraudulently, or to draw others as accomplices into the same fault,—these (I say) will sometimes cry aloud in the English tongue to the very officiant himself, or to others, commanding and enjoining them to make haste. *Item*, sometimes, commencing the service off-hand, some show no sort of shame in beginning again and again one service, while others begin another, (as for instance an Anthem or Responsory or suchlike,) with the accompaniment of quarrels and discords. There is yet another sin less of commission than of omission, which hath here become a rooted custom, and whereto in the past (if ye remember), we ourselves personally brought what we thought to be a sufficient remedy, not only by plain admonitions but by alluring indulgences, yet which hath now broken out yet worse through men's negligence: namely, that very few remain in the Choir during the Mattins of Mary, that Blessed, Glorious, and Sweetest Mother of Mercy, not considering that (though perchance some may say them more distinctly outside, as some judge of themselves, than together in the Choir, on account of the murmurs and tumult of divers and discordant voices,) yet to God and His Blessed Mother the gift of prayers offered by all together is incomparably more acceptable than the same prayers said or chanted separately in streets and corners, both as commending the unity of the Church, and also for the humble observance of the custom, statute, and precept, and on account of the presentation (as the Apostle saith) of many faces, and because it may chance that each deserveth not to be heard by himself, yet no faithful man doubteth that he may be helped by the accordant prayers of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *Contes Moralisés* of the contemporary English Franciscan Nicole Bozon (ed. Toulmin Smith, 1889, p. 207), where the friar tells of a son who read the lesson ill in church: "then said his father, 'In truth thou liest concerning God.'"



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

persons acceptable to God as there present in common with him. Moreover, if sedulous and spontaneous diligence were here brought to bear, with but a little further expense of time, those praises would be duly and distinctly and meritoriously rendered to God which can scarce be satisfactorily paid in this present fashion. Wherefore, stirring up and inciting your duty, we beseech, enjoin, charge, and command your discretion and devotion to read and expound these present letters of ours, on three separate days, in the Chapterhouse, to the Vicars and Ministers of our Cathedral; that ye may strive to admonish and induce and persuade them to abstain from the aforesaid faults and exercise themselves in good. Such as obey not must be sternly constrained first by due subtraction of their salaries; and those who still remain obstinate and rebellious, by sentence of excommunication (if they knowingly refuse to correct themselves), and lastly by actual banishment from the Cathedral; that their blood may rather be sprinkled on their own heads than be required at our hands by the Almighty Shepherd and Judge. Strive now so sedulously to fulfil this our present prayer and mandate, that ye may thereby reap up for yourselves a richer grace in the present, and everlasting glory for the future. Fare ye well.

### 58. ANOTHER

EXETER CATHEDRAL, 16 December 1333. (Mandate to the Subdean and Canon William de Nassyngtone: *Register*, p. 723.)

WE have learned from the lips of men worthy of credit, not without grave displeasure, that certain Vicars and other Ministers of our Cathedral, to the offence of God and the grievous hindrance of Divine Service, and to the scandal of our Cathedral Church itself, fear not irreverently and damnably to exercise disorders, laughter, gigglings, and other breaches of discipline, even with masks on their faces, by which obscene orgies of gesticulations they make vile the honour of the clergy before the eyes of the people. Wherefore we, having no small affection to the honour of God's house through the office committed to us, and willing to guard for the future against

## CATHEDRAL VISITATIONS

such wanton disorders, enjoin and command strictly to you, all and severally, appealing to your devotion, that, having called the said Vicars and Ministers to your presence upon receipt of these present Letters, ye do without delay publish this our mandate with all that is therein contained, and forbid them all and singly, in our name, ever again to presume to exercise the aforesaid or similar disorders, if they would fain escape from due canonical punishment.

### 59. ANOTHER

EXETER CATHEDRAL, with the Collegiate Churches of Ottery St Mary, Crediton, and Glasney. (Mandate dated 7 January 1360-1: *Register*, p. 1213.)

JOHN [etc.] Bishop of Exeter, to his beloved sons in Christ [etc.], wishing them health and honesty of clerical manners. It hath come to our knowledge, not without grievous amazement and displeasure of heart, that for these past years and some years precedent, at the most holy solemnities of Christ's Nativity, and the feasts of St Stephen, St John the Apostle and Evangelist, and the Innocents, when all faithful Christians are bound to busy themselves the more devoutly and quietly in praise of God and in Church Services, certain Ministers of our aforesaid Church, together with the boys, not only at Mattins and Vespers and other Hours, but also (which is more detestable) during the solemnity of the Mass, have rashly presumed, putting the fear of God behind them, after the pernicious example of certain [other] Churches, to associate together within the Church itself and play certain foolish and noxious games, unbecoming to clerical honesty:—nay, rather, to conduct detestable mockeries of Divine Service: wherein they have in many fashions defiled the Vestments and other Ornaments of the Church, to the no small damage and disgrace of this same Church and of ourselves, with spatterings of vile and drunken [. . .].<sup>1</sup> By whose gestures, or laughter and derisive

<sup>1</sup> As the editor points out, there is an evident corruption of the text here: it reads *vilium scilicet scenulentorumque sparsione multipliciter deturpando*. I have taken *scenulentorumque* as a clerical error for *temulentorumque*, and assumed the loss of one or two words before *sparsione*.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

giggings, not only are the congregation (who at those times, according to Catholic custom, do most especially flock to the Church), distracted from their due devotion, but they are also dissolved in disorderly laughter and unlawful pleasures, the Divine worship is mocked, and the Service wickedly impeded: whereby that which was first invented to excite and increase the devotion of the faithful is by such disorders converted—or rather perverted—to the irreverence and contempt of God and His Saints, not without guilt of blasphemy. We therefore, no longer able to wink at such abominable abuses or pass them by without remedy, enjoin and command you, under pain of suspension and excommunication, to desist henceforth altogether from such disorders and mockeries, and to permit none such hereafter to be practised in the aforesaid Church; but rather set your minds more devoutly than usual to conduct the Divine Service, as the reverence due to those days doth itself require. And, lest henceforth any ignorance avail to excuse you in this matter, we command you, the Warden,<sup>1</sup> solemnly to publish these present Letters before the impending feast of Christmas, in the presence of all the Ministers, and to cause these same letters, lest they fall into oblivion, to be transcribed into four or five of the Church books most commonly used; but if any shall presume to contravene this our mandate, cite him or cause him to be cited peremptorily to appear before us on the third lawful day after the aforesaid Feasts, to answer for this so rash presumption and to receive condign punishment.

<sup>1</sup> Of Ottery St Mary. The same letter (it is noted in the register) was sent "with the exception of a few changes" to the Dean and Chapter of Exeter and the authorities of Crediton and Glasney.

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### 60. ANOTHER

YORK MINSTER. A.D. 1519. In printing this last visitation in its original spelling, as a specimen of ecclesiastical English shortly before the Reformation, I have thought it best to save the reader trouble by appending a special glossary. Most of the words, however strange to the modern eye, become at once intelligible when read aloud. The Report may be found, in company with a great many others, in *York Fabric Rolls* (Surtees Soc., vol. xxxv, p. 267). The editor notes that he has omitted the frequent complaints against the characters of the officiants.

MDXIX.—ECCLES. CATH. EBOR. Imprimis at the re-newynge of the sacrament there wantethe a torche, and a clerke of ye vestre in his surples for the renovation of the same. Item we fynde grete neclygense of ye decons and clerkis of ye vestre yt the mesbuke is not clasped, wherby a fayre boke is nye lost. Item how one [of] ye basyns afor the heghauter wt ij candelse afor our Lady, of the southesyde, should be lighte all tymes of serves, which is sum tyme not done. Item the goodly reyredewse is so full of dust and copwebbes that by lyklyode it shalbe shortly lost wtoute it be clensed & better keppte than it hathe bene. Item the litile awterse is so ragged and torne that it were grete shame to se suche in any uplandyshe towne. Item the sudary that the colet holdes the patan in is to shamefull to be sene about the holy sacrament in suche a place. Item the cophynse in the where, as rectors of ye where sittē, the folkes yt be pylgrams and straungers wonderse to se suche in yt place & yet yer wantes one. Item all the hangynges of ye where lyeth opynly in the presbitory, dogges pysses of thame, wax droppys of thame, & the mynysters put furthe of yer rowmes. Item ye clothe yt coverse ye reyredewse is of party colors, whiche is not honeste for straungers to luke upon. Item the bokes of the where be caduke & yll, & so false yt [they] oftyn tymes makethe the vycars to make grete dyscorde in the where. Item if the lettron in the chapitor were skowred and set in myddys of the hye where, and the roste yerne in the same where set in ye chapitour, we thynke shulde do well.

THE VESTRY. Inprimis there wantethe towelse for the ebdomadory to wype of daly. Item the lavitory in the vestry,

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

where we resayve our water, it is stopped, & every mane, on efter an other, puttethe and wasshethe there crowet in a bukket wt water, whiche by ye same maner is corrupped, and so usethe we wt the same, and all in defawte of dressyng of ye pullye & stoppyng of the synke whiche were sone amendyd. Item a goodly well in the crowdes, whiche hathe bene used in old tyme & dyde grete goode what tyme as the churche was borned, whiche wantethe no thyng bot a pully & a rope, and the dore of the same is kepte lokkyd & no man nor woman can do there devotion in that place to our Lady. Item the vestiary, there is a chest full of suspent stuffe yt will make parores, amettes, coshyns, & to amende many usuall thynges in ye where, and such as ye secunde forme weres nowe is all so torne whiche tha walde amend well for every day. Item the albys for preists, many of thame be torne & made so strait both in the bodes and sleveys, that men cannot get thame on bot wt grete payne. Item the heghe awter is nowe served both ix lessons and dowbill fests all in lyke, there is ordande chaunge for bothe bot tha will not be had. Item the chylder cummethe abowte the awter sum in one colour and some in an other, wt vyle and unclenly albys nothyng sortyng accordyng to ye day. Item the cause this is not amended, in amendinge of copes, chysables, tunakles and such othere, it is not knowne who shulde pay for thame, where John Loksmythe is unpaid for the same amendinge, of his awn proper use, and not of the churche coste: if it were knowne whethere ye clerk of ye warke or the chaumberlane shuld do it we trust tha shulde be better looked on. Item the amendinge of the dalmatykes for ye Advent & Septuagesym myghte be done wt a litile cost, whiche nowe mosters away & not occupied. Item the lettron wherupon the gospell is red is moisterd away & faullyn downe, whiche specially wold be amendid by cause it is in opyn sighte. Item, specially, we beseche youe, that ye revestre may be keppte after ye old facion, that the dure may be kepte opyn as hathe bene frome the begynnynge of matens unto xj of ye cloke. Nowe, oftyen tymes, the dure is stokked, and we parsons & vicars cannot get brede, wyne nor water, when we be redy & makethe us to say no masse for watyng of the where. Item we find grete faute the churche walles be full of cop-

## CATHEDRAL VISITATIONS

webbys & all the pyloures of the same, whiche dothe full yll. Item we thynke it were convenient that whene we fetch a corse to the Church that we shulde be in our blak abbettes mornyngly, wt our hodes of the same of our hedes, as is used in many othere places. Item we desyre and besече youe that all the abbet may use there surples & ames wtowt blake abbet feriall, and othere frome Pasche to our latter Lady day, and generall processions, as tha do in other cathedrall churches, & this we desire for a special cause; oftyn it happs that the secund forme & othere that be negligēt oftyn tymes cummethe in there blak abbetts, when they shulde cum in surples, & when they shulde cum in surples thay will cum in abbet, whiche wolde not be so if we did as tha do in other places cathedrall. Item we fynde the segistans gevethe not suche attendaunce of the Church as hathe bene, for it hathe bene that one of them hathe gevyn attendaunce all ye day when there wek fel, and sawe there were no dogges nor bryborse in ye Church, bot tha wolde rewarde thame; and also a resonable tyme betwene ye fyrst pele and the secund, and also they wolde have no (query *mo* ?) plukkes, as we thynke, than tha giff tham, for ye pelys be veray shorte. . . .

## GLOSSARY

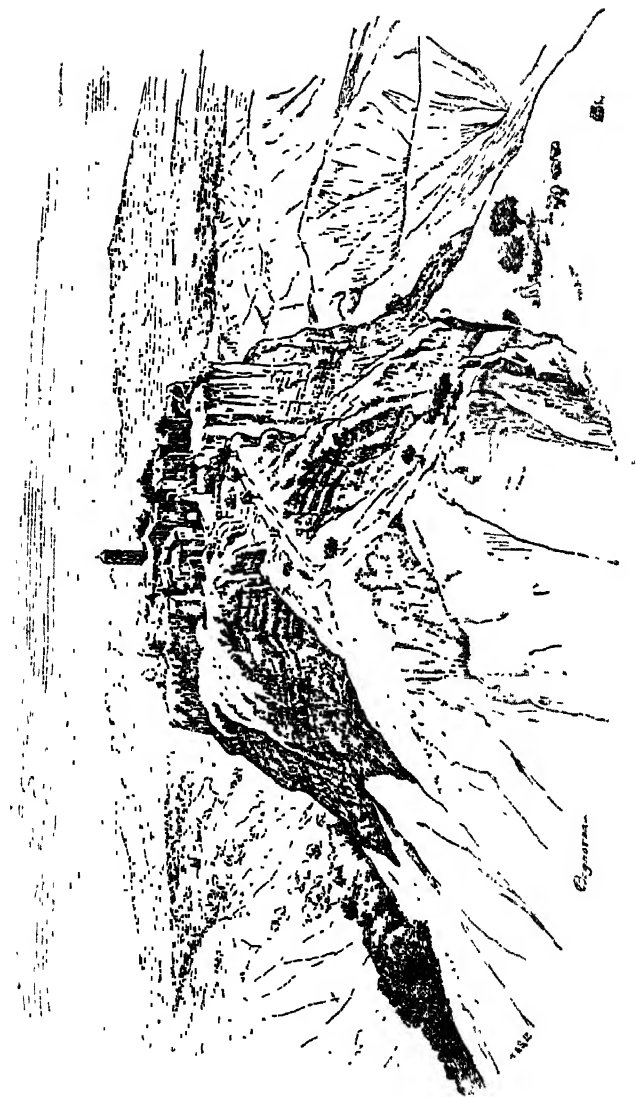
Mesbuke=mass-book; heghauter=high altar; wt=with; reyredewse=reredos; awterse=altars; uplandishe towne=remote country village; sudary=towel; colet=acolyte; cophynse=chests; where=choir; yt=that; presbitory=the part of the choir where the canons' stalls are; put furthe, etc., apparently means that the ministers are responsible for having put these hangings forth from their proper places; caduke=dilapidated; lettron=lectern; chapitor=chapter-house; roste yerne=a small iron oven used for baking the eucharistic bread; ebdomadory=the priest who has charge of the services for the week; crowet=cruet, for holding the wine and water before consecration at mass; sone=soon; crowdes=crypt; borned=burned; suspent=cast-off; parores=trimmings; amette=amyt, a mass-vestment; coshyn=cushion; weres=whereas; albs=albs; ordande=ordained; chysable=chasuble; tunakle=tunicle; moster or moister=moulder; revestre=vestry; dure=door; stokked=shut; watynge=waiting; abbettes=habits; ames=amyt; segistans=sacristans, sextons; when there wek fel=when it fell to their week of duty; bryborse=thieves, tramps; plukke=pull of a bell; pelys=peals.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Giovanni Fidanza, born in 1221 at Bagnorea in the upper valley of the Tiber, joined the Franciscans at an early age as Brother Bonaventura. He became first Professor of Theology at Paris and then Minister General of his Order. Dante has immortalized his character and genius (*Paradiso* xii); but his moderation as General rendered him unpopular with the Spirituals; and he is the unnamed Adversary who in chap. xlviii of the *Fioretti*, is represented as persecuting the saintly John of Parma. In concert with his old friend and fellow-Franciscan Odo Rigaldi (see this vol., no. 44) he led the van of the Reforming party at the Ecumenical Council of Lyons; and died, probably of overwork, before the end of the Council (1274). The following Extract is abbreviated from the treatise *Quare Fratres Minores praedicant* (ed. Mainz, 1609, vol. vii, pp. 341 ff.).

### 61. A SAINT'S APOLOGY

NOW this is the reason why, in early days, no Religious were called or sent by the Apostolic See to the aforesaid offices of preaching and confession. When the sickness is as yet slight, it needs fewer and lighter remedies; but when it begins to grow strong and spread abroad, then we must apply more and stronger remedies lest the sick man's state become desperate. So also, now that the state of the world seems far worse than of old, it is fit that there should be more helpers, according to the text: *The harvest truly is great, but the fit and faithful labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his vineyard*. Again as it is written in Romans: *Where sin abounded, grace did more abound*. We see the harvest of people multiplied in our days, and woods hewn down for the building of towns [or villages]. We see sins invented in great numbers, and more perplexing cases [of conscience] springing up from day to day; the wicked becoming still more incorrigible from mere habit, and more hardened in their sins. Again, we see that many of the clergy by their evil example corrupt the laity both in morals and in faith; also, that few of them are experienced enough to teach as they should, or can be trusted to do so. Again, we see that they rule negligently over the souls committed to their charge, and are too closely bent upon worldly business. Again, that many of them are suspended, excommunicated, and hindered in



BAGNOREA

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## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

divers manners from the performance of their duty. Again, that few rectors reside in their parishes, but the cure of souls is offered for sale among slight vicars: and that the prelates,<sup>1</sup> given up to temporal cares, dissemble these things, so that there is scarce any hope of correction. If, moreover, they ever wished to correct these things and remove the unprofitable persons, they have no better to put in their places. Since therefore the Church is now as a ship tempest-tossed, wherein the rowers quake for fear and the stormy billows almost cover the bark, therefore we Friars have been sent by the supreme Pilot, and supported by the authority of the Apostolic See, that we may scour the world in our little boats and snatch from the waves all such as we find in peril of shipwreck, to bring them back to the shore of salvation.

Now there is no parish that has not either a proper Parson, or one in some way insufficient, or one that is no Parson [*nullum*]. . . . Since therefore the parishioners of these [last two] classes both may and should confess to others, rather than to such as seem their Parsons, on account of these said defects; and since the laity have no discernment to choose better, and the vicious clergy would rather send them to others like themselves than to proper priests, and there are few indeed among the clergy nowadays who are not spotted with any of these blemishes, therefore we Friars have been sent throughout the world by the Apostolic See.<sup>2</sup> . . . There are other cases which sometimes make even honest persons fear confession to their own priests; because vicars are unstable and often changed, wherefore men dare not reveal their secrets to them, since they must so often have unknown confessors. Again, because many [*plerique*] of them are so vicious that an honest woman fears to lose her reputation if she whisper secretly with them. Again, because many [*plures*] of them are unknown, and men fear that they are apostates, or hindered in their priestly office,

<sup>1</sup> The *ipsi* of the text seems an obvious error for *praelati*, to whom alone the following complaints of St Bonaventura could apply.

<sup>2</sup> The rest of this Extract is from the second part of the treatise, the authenticity of which has lately been questioned for the first time by the Friars of Quaracchi, but without sufficient reason. Their main argument is that it is wanting in a single manuscript: another is that "it contains scarcely anything but a repetition of the first part," which is perfectly true, and may go far to reassure the less sceptical reader.

## A SAINT'S APOLOGY

or perchance with no priestly Orders at all. . . . Now, that it may be more plainly seen how few there are now in these parts among the rectors or their vicars who have free power of binding or loosing, or who deal well with men's souls in confession, and that ye may thus understand how sorely our Brethren are needed to supply their places, and to succour perishing souls, let these things following be considered. Every man that is suspended from his office, or irregular, or excommunicated, or who hath entered by an ill way into a cure of souls, hath no power of binding or loosing, nor aught else pertaining to the exercise of that jurisdiction which the Church hath forbidden to him: wherefore, whatsoever that man bindeth or looseth or the like, is of no validity. See therefore how very many nobles and great men, in whose gift benefices are, frequently incur the sentence of excommunication, whether by law or by judicial sentence, through their wars and other excesses, or in other ways lose the right of conferring such benefices. . . . In like manner we see Bishops, through wars or other excesses, oftentimes fall under sentence of excommunication or suspension, or become suspended by the lord Pope, or excommunicated. Some, again, are either themselves promoted through simony or simoniacally confer cures of souls on others. Likewise certain other prelates gain their own promotion and promote others by simoniacal means; and all benefices thus conferred, or by such means, confer no legal rights on the recipients. We see rectors hire out their parishes to their vicars on condition of certain yearly pensions, and one will oftentimes supplant another by promising a greater pension, that he may thus get the parish; which is oftentimes done incautiously and with peril of simony. We see that very many undertake cures of souls contrary to canon law; as those who have no clerical Orders, or are under the right age, or of illegitimate birth, or are subject to any excommunication or irregularity, and therefore unable to receive such a benefice. Many, again, have several benefices with cures of souls, which involve certain obstacles invalidating their election or institution, as for instance the plurality of the benefices, or the like. For even though some have a Papal dispensation permitting them to take ecclesiastical revenues

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

up to a certain yearly sum, yet by this the Supreme Pontiff doth not intend to grant any man the unconditional right of amassing so many cures of souls as to glut his ravenous appetite indiscriminately with their revenues, leaving the souls shepherdless and forsaken; but (as the best and most experienced authorities expound) such dispensations rather apply to other revenues, as prebends and other benefices which involve no cure of souls. We see again that judges oftentimes command parish priests, under pain of suspension or excommunication already pronounced, to proclaim or execute certain judgments, which these neglect and thus incur the penalty. We see that many, receiving Orders against the episcopal prohibition, incur the penalty of suspension; we see that students oftentimes strike [other] acolytes in wrath and thus fall under canonical sentence, yet seek no absolution, but proceed to [Holy] Orders or take church benefices, solemnly serving churches and executing clerical duties.<sup>1</sup> We see that very many among the clergy are notorious fornicators, keeping concubines in their own houses or elsewhere, or sinning at large with several women. Now a notorious fornicator is defined as he whose guilt can by no equivocation be concealed, or is testified by the public which (according to some authorities) consists of ten men or women: and all such notorious sinners are *ipso facto* suspended both as to themselves and as to [their ministrations to] others. Some are also sometimes [specially] excommunicated by their own bishops or by the lord Pope's officials. . . . There are very many more impediments of the clergy which I omit for superfluity's sake; but by these few words it may be seen how many parish priests there are in these parts who are such in themselves, or promoted or instituted by such men, or in such ways, that they have no power to bind or loose souls; so that men may know how sorely God's Church needs the Friars to take their places, and succour souls which thus might perish.

<sup>1</sup> All university scholars were, in theory at least, in the lower clerical Orders, and thus enjoyed full clerical immunities. These unabsolved strikers would be *ipso facto* excommunicate; so also would all who, when suspended, went on celebrating mass; therefore the absolution they pronounced in the confessional would be as invalid as many of their other ministrations; and they themselves would thus plunge daily deeper into mortal sin.

## THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

### 62. THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

(From Thomas Cantimpratanus, *De Apibus*, lib. II, cf. 54, p. 440.)

THE sixth and last cause of joy [to the blessed spirits in heaven] will be to behold the damned on their left hand, to whom (when He hath set them on His left) the Judge will say, "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire!" Concerning these, as the Psalmist saith, "The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge." And Esaias saith, in the person of Christ, "They" (that is the saints) "shall go out and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: . . . and they shall be a loathsome sight to all flesh." Yet some simple folk are wont to wonder that the saints, at the Last Judgment, will be in no wise disturbed at the sight of the damnation of their parents and friends; but all faithful souls will account this their astonishment as mere folly, seeing that they know how the saints, confirmed in their perpetual exultation, can be touched by no trouble or grief. For if, even in this present life, it is required in every perfect Christian that he should become united to and accordant with the divine justice in all things, how can we marvel if we now believe of the saints in glory that they are not grieved even at the saddest of sights among earthlymen? [He then goes on to relate how the Blessed Marie d'Oignies, having been certified in a vision of her own mother's damnation, ceased thenceforth to weep for her.]

The following Extract is from the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, generally attributed to St Bonaventura in the Middle Ages and printed in most editions of his works. It is, however, attributed in the *Conformities*, no doubt correctly, to a later Franciscan, Brother Joannes de Caulibus, who "wrote according to St Bonaventura," but concerning whom nothing more is known. It admirably exemplifies that graceful intermixture of Bible history and legend upon which so much of medieval art was based.

### 63. A CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

So when the term of nine months was approaching, there went forth an imperial decree that the whole world should be registered, each in his own city. When therefore Joseph wished

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

to go to his own city of Bethlehem, and knew that the time of his wife's delivery was at hand, he took her with him. Our Lady therefore went again on this long journey (for Bethlehem is hard by Jerusalem, at a distance of some five or six miles). They therefore took with them an ox and an ass, and went as poor cattle-dealers. So when they were come to Bethlehem, seeing that they were poor, they could find no lodging, for many had come together on the same business. Think pitifully of our Lady, and behold her so young and tender (for she was of the age of fifteen years), wearied with her long journey and conversing with shame among those folk, seeking a place of rest and finding none, for all sent her and her companion away; and thus they were compelled to take shelter in a certain covered way, where men took refuge in rainy weather.<sup>1</sup> There it may be that Joseph, who was a master-carpenter, enclosed himself after a fashion. But now consider with the utmost diligence all that I shall say, more especially because I purpose to tell things which were revealed and shown by our Lady herself, as I heard them from a trustworthy saint of our Order, to whom (as I believe) they were revealed. When her hour was come, which was one Sunday midnight, the Virgin rose and leaned against a certain pillar which stood there, and Joseph sat sadly by, mourning perchance that he could not prepare all that was fitting. . . . And the Virgin Mother, stooping forthwith, raised her Babe and gently embraced Him, then she laid Him in her lap and, taught by the Holy Ghost, began to anoint Him all over with the milk of her breast, which was filled from Heaven; after which she wrapped Him in her own head-veil and laid Him in the manger. And now the ox and the ass bent their knees and stretched their heads over the manger, breathing through their nostrils as though they knew by the light of reason that the Babe, so miserably clad, needed their warmth at a time of such bitter cold. His mother, for her part, bowed her knees in adoration, and gave thanks to God, saying, "Lord and Holy Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast given me Thy Son; and I adore Thee, God Everlasting, and Thee Son of the living

<sup>1</sup> It is evident that the writer imagined Bethlehem built like an Italian city, with covered arcades along the streets.

## A CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

God and of me." In like manner did Joseph adore Him; and taking the ass's saddle and drawing from it a little cushion of wool or rough cloth, he laid it by the manger that our Lady might sit thereon. She therefore set herself down thereon, and laid the saddle under her elbow; and thus sat the Lady of the World, holding her face over the manger and fixing her eyes with all the desire of her heart upon her dearly-beloved Son. Thus far by revelation, which after she had declared our Lady vanished away; but an Angel stayed behind and told the Brother great songs of praise which he repeated to me, who have been able neither to learn nor to write them. . . . So, when our Lord was thus born, a multitude of angels stood there and adored their God; then they went in all haste to the shepherds hard by, perchance at a mile's distance, to whom they told how and where our Lord was born; after which they ascended to heaven with songs of rejoicing, announcing the glad news to their fellow-citizens also. Wherefore the whole court of heaven, filled with joy, made great feast and praise; and, having offered thanks to God, all the angels of heaven came according to their Orders, turn by turn, to see the face of their Lord God; where, worshipping Him with all reverence, and His Mother likewise, they quired unto Him with songs of praise. For which of them, hearing this news, would have stayed behind in heaven, and not visit his Lord thus humbly set on earth? No such pride could have entered into any angel's heart; wherefore the Apostle saith: "And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith: 'And let all the angels of God worship Him.'" I think it sweet to meditate thus of the angels, howsoever the truth may stand.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The thirteenth-century MS. known as *Carmina Burana* was preserved for centuries in a special cupboard of the monastery of Benediktbeuern in Bavaria; like other volumes which have come down to us in a similar way, it contains the strangest mixture of piety, profanity, and obscenity. The piece here translated (fol. 111a, ed. Schmeller, p. 22) is the mildest specimen of the parodies in which wandering clerks delighted: it should be compared with the Monk's Martyrdom in the Franciscan MS. Harl. 913, fol. 60.

### 64. THE CARDINALS' GOSPEL

THE Beginning of the Gospel according to Marks of Silver. In those days said the Pope to the Romans: "When the Son of Man shall come to the seat of our majesty, say first of all, 'Friend, wherefore art Thou come hither?' And if He shall persevere in knocking and giving you nought, cast him forth into outer darkness." Now it came to pass that a certain poor clerk came to the court of the lord Pope, and cried out, saying: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you the door-keepers of the Pope, because the hand of poverty hath touched me. For I am poor and in misery; wherefore I beseech you to succour my calamity and my wretchedness." But they, hearing this, were moved to indignation and said: "Friend, thy poverty perish with thee: get thee behind me, Satan! for thou savourest not the things that be of money. Verily, verily I say unto thee, thou shalt not enter into the joy of the Lord until thou shalt have paid unto the last farthing!" The poor man therefore departed, and sold his cloak and his coat and all that he had, and gave to the cardinals and ushers and door-keepers. But they said: "What is this among so many?" And they cast him forth from the doors: and going forth he wept bitterly, as one that could not be comforted. Afterwards there came to the court a rich clerk, grown fat and thick and gross, who for sedition's sake had committed murder. He gave first to the door-keeper, then to the usher, and thirdly to the cardinals: but they thought within themselves that they should have received more. Now the lord Pope, hearing that his cardinals and ministers had received many gifts from this clerk, grew sick unto death: but the rich man sent unto him an electuary of gold and silver, and forth-

## THE CARDINALS' GOSPEL

with he grew whole again. Then the lord Pope called together his cardinals and ministers and said unto them: "Brethren, take heed lest any man deceive you with vain words. For I give you an example, that as I take gifts, so should you do also."

Berthold von Regensburg, or of Ratisbon, was born about 1220 of a well-to-do citizen family. He joined the Franciscans while still a youth, and became the favourite pupil of David of Augsburg, whose writings were often attributed in the Middle Ages to St Bonaventura. He was already famous as a preacher in 1250; until his death in 1272 he tramped from village to village, like a Whitefield or a Wesley, through Bavaria, Rhineland, Switzerland, Swabia, Austria, Moravia, Bohemia, Silesia, Thuringia, and Franconia. His fame spread all over Europe; he is enthusiastically extolled in the chronicles of Salimbene and the xxiv Generals; and Roger Bacon, speaking of contemporary preaching in words which do not err on the side of compliment, expressly excepts Berthold as one who "alone maketh more excellent profit in preaching than almost all the other Friars of either Order" (*Opp. Inedd.* R.S. p. 310). A thick volume of Berthold's sermons, translated into modern German, is in its third edition as a book of living theology (Regensburg, Manz. 1873). The text here used is that of Franz Pfeiffer (2 vols. Vienna, 1862). The abrupt changes from *thou* to *ye* are in the original.

### 65. PARDONERS AND HERETICS

(*Pred.* i, 393. Berthold is describing the different hindrances that keep men from God.)

HEAVEN is still below us as above us, and when the sun is in heaven below us, then it is night with us above. So the earth stands midway betwixt us and the sun; wherefore by night the earth hinders us from seeing the sun until morning, when he shall rise again in the East, as Solomon saith: "The sun riseth, and goeth down, and returneth to his place." So the earth hindereth us far and wide that we may not see the worldly sun: and this earth is a type of a certain sin which hinders us far and wide from the sight of the true sun. This sin is called covetousness for wealth—filthy lucre—and it is grown so great that no man can measure it. Alas! how many folk there are who strive for filthy lucre, and gain filthy lucre! Such are deceivers in their trade and handiwork; such are men thieves



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and women thieves, within the house and without; usurers, pawnbrokers, money-lenders, forestallers that they may buy cheaper, and all such as inflict violent taxes, unrighteous taxes, unrighteous tolls, unrighteous contributions; such as take on this hand and not on that hand; and penny-preachers, who are among the dearest servants that Satan hath in the world. Fie! penny-preacher, murderer of all the world! How many a soul dost thou cast with thy filthy lucre from God's own sunlight to the bottom of hell, where there is no hope more for them! Thou promisest so much indulgence for a single halfpenny or a single penny, that many thousand people trust thee and dream falsely that they have done penance for all their sins with that penny or that halfpenny, as thou babblest to them. So they will do no right penance, and go straight hence to hell where there is no more help for them. Therefore shalt thou too be cast to the bottom of hell, and all they shall be cast upon thee whom thou hast seduced away from almighty God and hast sold, every soul for a penny or a halfpenny. Thou murderer of right penitence! thou hast murdered right penitence in our midst, which is one of the seven holy things of the highest that God hath. It hath been so murdered now by penny-preachers that there are few among us who will still do penance for their sins; for they count upon thy false promises. For this penny-preacher preacheth to them so long and in such manifold words of our Lord's passion that men take him for a true messenger of God: for he weepeth in his preaching and useth all manner of deceit whereby he may coax pennies from his hearers, and their souls into the bargain. Therefore be so many led astray by their covetousness that they never see the true sun.<sup>1</sup> Even

<sup>1</sup> So also wrote the Oxford Chancellor Gascoigne, about A.D. 1450, "Sinners say in our days, 'I care not how many or great sins I commit in God's sight; for I can get with all ease and despatch a plenary remission from any penalty or guilt whatsoever through an absolution and indulgence granted me by the Pope, whose writing and grant I have bought for fourpence or sixpence, or won at a game of ball.'" Evidence of this kind is so essential to the real comprehension of medieval life, and the facts are so persistently falsified in certain quarters, that I must append here for the reader's comparison a quotation of a kind from which I have usually tried to refrain in this book. Abbot Gasquet, in his *Eve of the Reformation*, p. 437, writes, "In the literature of this period, it must be remembered, there is nothing to show that the true nature of a 'pardon' or Indulgence was not fully and commonly understood. There is no evidence that it was in any way interpreted as

## PARDONERS AND HERETICS

in cloisters has covetousness so utterly won the upper hand that God must ever have pity to see how things go in some cloisters, with sacrilege, with simony, with possession of private property. Thou monk or nun, if but a halfpenny be found in thy possession there is no help for thy soul! (contrition and repentance, nevertheless, I refuse to no man). "Evil lay-folk, evil religious," as it is written; but that is the very devil made visible! Thus the world betokeneth covetousness. The earth is cold and dry, so also is covetousness; it is cold of true love and dry of all true contrition. Ye priests, to all men who are so cold and dry at their last end that they will not restore and give back their ill-gained wealth (so far as it is in their power, and so far as the rightful possessors are known), to such men should ye never give our Lord's Body, whether they be whole in body or sick, neither before their end nor after their end; nor shall ye ever bury them in a consecrated spot, nor shall any baptised hand ever be laid upon them. "Brother Berthold, how shall we then do?" Why, take a rope and make a noose in it and put the noose on the man's foot with a hook, and drag him out of the door. "Brother Berthold, but when the threshold is high, how shall we do then?" Then shall ye dig through the threshold and drag him through; but never shall a baptised hand be laid on him. Then tie him to a horse's tail and drag him out to the crossways where the hanged criminals and the suicides lie. Drag him to the gallows with the rest of the gallows-birds; he is scarce worth even that. . . .

The third thing that leads us astray is betokened by the moon. . . . that is, unbelief. Now see how many thousand men are led astray thereby, that they never see the high and true sun. Firstly, heathendom far and wide and great; and then Jews and heretics into the bargain. Now have pity yourselves, that God may be pitiful to you, for that so many men are damned through unbelief. The moon betokens unbelief, because unbelief is of so many changing forms. The heathens

a remission of sin, still less that any one was foolish enough to regard it as a permission to commit this or that offence against God." The Roman Catholic Bishop of Newport (while mistakenly limiting the period), quotes this statement under the evident impression that it is trustworthy and conclusive (*XIX Century*, January 1901, p. 170).

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have so many and divers unbeliefs that there is no end thereof; and the Jews believe in one house that which they believe not in another, and they believe such simple things of God as they scarce dare repeat to their children; for they are become heretics and break their Old Testament in all points. Twelve of them came together and made a book that is called *Talmoud*, and it is a mere mass of heresy, wherein stand such accursed heresies that it is pity they should live. It saith and saith such evil things as I am loth to repeat. Ask me a Jew where God is and what He doth; then saith he: "He sitteth on the heaven, and His legs stretch down even to the earth." Alas, good God! Thou must needs have two long hosen if this speech be true! And therefore doth the moon betoken unbelief, because she is so unstable and her changes are so many. To-day she is young and to-morrow older; to-day she wanes, to-morrow she waxes; now small, now great; now riding aloft in heaven, to-morrow riding alow; now here, now there; now this, now that. Even so are faithless folk; so are the heathen, so are the Jews, so are the heretics. They have the most manifold unbeliefs that ever were heard of. They have a good hundred and a half of heresies, the one believeth not as the others. . . . Nevertheless, however many names they have, all alike are called *Ketzer*.<sup>1</sup> And that is not without cause in God's providence that they are called *Ketzer*. Now wherefore are they not called *Hunder*, or *Mauser*, or *Vogler*, or *Schweiner*, or *Geiszer*, after dogs, mice, fowls, swine, or goats? God called the creature a *Ketzer* for this cause, that he can creep secretly where no man seeth him, as doth also the cat [German, *Katze*], who can make herself most soft and secret; and there is no beast, for all her soft ways, that hath so soon done so great evil as the cat; but most of all and swiftest of all in summer. Let all folk beware of the cat! She goeth apart and licketh a toad wheresoever she may find him, under a hedge or wherever he may be found, until the toad begin to bleed. Thus his poison maketh the cat thirsty, then she maketh for the water whence Christian-folk are wont to cook or drink; and she drinketh thereof and defileth the folk so that many a man lieth half a year sick thereafter, or a whole year, or his

<sup>1</sup> *Ketzer* (corrupted from *Cathari*) is the ordinary German word for heretic.

## PARDONERS AND HERETICS

whole life long, or taketh sudden death thereby. Oftentimes drinketh the cat so greedily that a drop falleth from her eye into the water, or that she sneezeth therein; and whosoever useth that water for cooking or drinking must taste bitter death therefrom; or she sneezeth in a dish or some other vessel wherefrom a man will eat or drink, whence he taketh great harm and sickness, or perchance two or four, or as many folk as are in the house. Therefore, good folk, drive the cat from you, for the breath that cometh from her throat is most unwholesome and dangerous. Bid the maids drive her forth from the kitchen or wherever else ye see her, for she is deadly unclean. Therefore is the heretic called *Ketzer*, because he is like no beast so much as a cat, for he goeth so spiritually to good people and speaketh such sweet words at the first and can do all as softly as the cat herself; and even so swiftly hath he defiled a man's body. Thus doth the heretic; he will rehearse to thee so sweet speeches of God and the angels that thou wouldst swear a thousand oaths he were an angel himself, yet is he a devil in human form; and he saith he will show thee an angel and will teach thee so that thou shalt see God with thy bodily eyes, and so much of this sort will he say to thee that he will soon have turned thee from thy Christian faith and there shall be no more hope for thee. Therefore he is called *Ketzer*, because his soft ways are as baneful as a cat's; yea, and far more baneful! The cat will defile thy body, the heretic defileth the soul and body, so that all hope of both is lost. So baneful is he that, had I a single sister in the whole countryside wherein there was but one heretic, I should live in fear for her sake because of that single heretic, so destructive is he. Therefore let all folk take good heed of him. I hold—God pardon the word—my Christian faith as fast as every Christian man rightly should; but before I would dwell knowingly for a single fortnight in a house wherein a heretic was, rather would I dwell for a whole year in one house with five hundred devils. What heretic! art thou perchance here in this congregation? Now God Almighty grant that none be before me here! Moreover, they go not into goodly towns; for there the folks are understanding, and mark them for heretics at the very first word. They love to creep round the hamlets and villages,

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and even to the children that herd the geese in the field. Formerly they went even in clerical garb, and never swore for any occasion, whereby indeed men knew them.<sup>1</sup> Now they change their life and their heresy even as the changing moon; now they wear sword and dagger, long hair and long garments; and now they swear oaths. There was a day when they had rather suffered death, when they said that God had forbidden to swear; and now their masters allow them to swear oaths. Say, wretched heretic, if God hath forbidden it, how then can thy master allow it? What devil hath given him such power—to a cobbler or weaver or spurrier, such as thou callest thy spiritual master? How may such an one allow what God hath disallowed? Ah, the man shall turn twelve Christian folk to heretics, and thereby shall he atone for his sinful oath! Fie, miserable heretic, rather shalt thou thyself be burned, than that thou shalt make another heretic like unto thyself!

Thomas Cantimpratanus (of Chantimpré in Brabant) was the son of a noble who had fought under our Richard I in the Holy Land. A hermit near Antioch, to whom the father had confessed his sins, warned him that some of them would keep him long in purgatory unless he bred up one of his sons to the priesthood. The child Thomas was therefore sent to school at Liège, where (as he tells us himself) he spent eleven years. At the age of fifteen he was much impressed by Jacques de Vitry's preaching. In early manhood he became a Canon Regular at Chantimpré, but passed over to the stricter Dominicans about 1231. He became a very distinguished preacher, a suffragan bishop, and a fairly voluminous writer. By far the most valuable of his works is the *Bonum Universale de Apibus*, a treatise on virtues and vices by analogy with the life of the bee, illustrated by personal and historical anecdotes. This was written somewhere about 1260; my extracts are from the Douay edition of 1597.

### 66. A MOTHER'S TEARS

(Lib. II, c. liii, p. 415.)

It was my own mother who told me the story which I am about to relate. My grandmother had a firstborn son of most excellent promise, comely beyond the wont of children, at

<sup>1</sup> The avoidance of oaths, whether in common speech or in a court of Law, is recorded in inquisitors' manuals as a presumption of heresy. Many readers will remember how Chaucer's Host "smells a Lollard in the wind" so soon as the Poor Parson begins to protest against profane language. Compare Extract 12 above.

## A MOTHER'S TEARS

whose death she mourned and could not be consoled, partly, perchance, through a foreboding of future ills; for after him she had another son who, though he was renowned in knight-hood, yet, seduced by the pomp of vain glory, became an utter prodigal and squandered his paternal inheritance. His mother, therefore, as we have said, mourned for her firstborn with a grief that could not be consoled, until one day, as she went by the way, she saw in her vision a band of youths moving onwards, as it seemed to her, with exceeding great joy; and she, remembering her son and weeping that she saw him not in this joyful band, suddenly beheld him trailing weary footsteps after the rest. Then with a grievous cry the mother asked: "How comes it, my son, that thou goest alone, lagging thus behind the rest?" Then he opened the side of his cloak and showed her a heavy water-pot, saying: "Behold, dear mother, the tears which thou hast vainly shed for me, through the weight whereof I must needs linger behind the rest! Thou therefore shalt turn thy tears to God, and pour forth thy pious and devout heart in the presence of the Sacrifice of Christ's Body, with alms to the poor: then only shall I be freed from the burden wherewith I am now grieved."

## 67. A STRANGE ELECTION

(Lib. i, c. ii, p. 10.)

CERTAIN canons, not being able to agree in the election of a bishop, gave up their votes to the Provost and the Dean on condition that they should choose one of the ministers of that church; after which they went their ways, leaving these others to order more freely the election of the bishop. One of the canons, unwilling to defer the hour of dinner, hastened from the Chapter-house to the nearest tavern; where, having dined, he sat down to play dice, for he was a youth of disorderly life, though excelling all the rest in mother-wit, affable to all, and eminent for his natural gifts. When therefore the Provost and Dean, having conferred together, saw that they could find none spiritual or proper for the office among all their fellow ministers, then at last they agreed to choose for the bishopric

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that young canon who had such excellent parts. The choice was proclaimed to the Chapter, the procession was ordained, and all moved in solemn array to the tavern. There they found the youth, who had gambled away his clothes. They dragged him weeping and struggling into the open air, carried him to the church, and set him in the bishop's seat, where in due time he was consecrated. He, therefore, as soon as he found himself a bishop, was changed into another man, and ordered all things that were proper to his office so perfectly within himself that no vestige of his former life remained, and men might have believed him to have lived all his life in this high station. He so managed the outward affairs of his bishopric that none should hinder him in the exercises of his spiritual offices. Why should we marvel? The free gift of virtue which had come upon him shaped the possibilities of his excellent nature. . . . Yet, though the choice of this youth, who had as yet been given to vanity, had in this case so good and happy an issue, yet it should by no means be made into a precedent where any safer way can be found. But what should be done in any congregation where many wise, noble, or powerful men, ungraced by a good life or manners, strive for authority over the rest, may be seen in that which here followeth. [Among the bees,] when the froward members of the hive begin to grow to maturity, then all with one consent fall upon them and slay them, lest they distract the community and incite the rest to sedition. So when such undisciplined men begin to set up their horn of liberty, they should be repressed without delay by such as are holier than they, and further advanced in virtue. They should be kept close and withdrawn from all offices of authority, lest they find any occasion of showing their malice. Against such Ezekiel crieth: "Remove the diadem, take off the crown": What then? Do I here inveigh against learned men? Do I teach my readers to abhor the noble or powerful? God forbid. Nay, if such are shown to be fit by manners that suit their station, then, as the Apostle saith, they are "esteemed worthy of double honour": But alas! in these days learning for the most part is puffed up without charity, worldly nobility is for the most part degenerate in manners; almost all are wont foully to abuse their power. Of old, the Apostle Paul, though

## A STRANGE ELECTION

he went round the whole world and was most learned in the law, "by the foolishness of preaching saved them that believed." Peter, by throwing out his net and leaving his ship, subdued the Roman Empire; and do our pontiffs in these days, those that hold the highest places, believe that the Church can be firmly built with the noble but lukewarm blood of infants?—that Church which was founded on the blood of robust martyrs? God forbid!

### 68. THE ACCURSED TALMUD

(Lib. i, c. iii, p. 14.)

I MYSELF also have seen another Archbishop in France, a man of learning and noble birth, upon whom the following vengeance fell from God. [Saint] Louis King of France, devoutest of princes, commanded about the year 1239, at the persuasion of Brother Henry of Cologne, of the Order of Friars Preachers, that men should gather together at Paris, under pain of death, all copies of that most abominable Jewish book called the Talmud, wherein unheard-of heresies and blasphemies against Christ and His Mother were written in many places; wherefore divers copies of this book were brought to Paris to be burned. The Jews therefore came in tears to the Archbishop, who was the King's chief Councillor, and offered him untold gold for the preservation of those books. He, corrupted by these bribes, repaired to the King, whose boyish mind he soon bent to his own will. The Jews, having recovered their books, ordained a solemn yearly day of thanksgiving; but in vain, since the Spirit of God had ordered otherwise: for at the year's end, on the same day and at that very place where these execrable books had been rendered back—to wit, at Vincennes near Paris—the Archbishop aforesaid was seized with intolerable inward pains on his way to the King's council, and died that same day amidst cries and lamentations. The King with all his train fled from the spot, fearing sore lest he also should be struck by God's hand; and within a short space, at the persuasion of Brother Henry as before, the Jews' books were gathered together under pain of death and burned



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in very great multitudes. Now note, good Reader, that all Eastern Jews do hereticate and excommunicate their brethren who, against the law of Moses and the Prophets, accept and copy this book called Talmud; yet this Christian Archbishop defended such a book!

### 69. THE PLURALIST'S FATE

(Lib. i, c. xix, p. 62. The author has been complaining of pluralism and absenteeism rampant in the Church.)

I SPENT eleven years of my youth in a certain Episcopal city, where the Cathedral church was served by sixty-two Canons endowed with exceeding fat prebends of the value of almost two hundred *livres parisis*;<sup>1</sup> yet many of these occupied many other benefices. Lo now, what vengeance of God's I have seen against those foul occupiers of benefices! So may the Holy Trinity, the One God, testify and judge me, as I have seen few of these men die the death of other men; but all died suddenly and in reprobation: so that one of them, hearing how one of his fellows had gone to bed in sound health and had been found dead in the morning, clapped his hands and cried, "What would ye have? He hath, as ye see, died after the wont and custom of our Cathedral!" I myself have seen, within a few years, four archdeacons of that church die after this fashion: see, Reader, and marvel at the miracle! The first, falling from his great barded charger, brake his neck, and gave up the ghost. The second sat down one morning in his stall, and was found to be dead. The third fell backwards as he stood in choir, while Christ's body was being raised on high in the mass; and, losing sense and speech at once, he died on the third day like a brute beast without the sacraments of the Church. The fourth, refusing to confess or receive the sacraments, died thus and was buried in unhallowed ground.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* about £1200 modern English money. The cathedral in question is Liège.

## THE MAIDEN'S PSALTER

### 70. THE MAIDEN'S PSALTER

(Lib. 1, c. xxiii, p. 76.)

I KNEW in Brabant a woman of most holy life, the manner of whose living I will briefly narrate, that thou mayest the more easily believe that which shall follow. She was enclosed within a scanty cell of stone; she wore an iron coat of mail next to her flesh, and over the mail a hair-shirt of bristles which pricked her deeply through the mail. She slept upon the hardest cobble-stones, at broken intervals, and bare-footed; she ate only thrice a week, and then only according to weight and measure, of a bread made with equal parts of ashes and dough. This woman, in her prayers, offered daily supplications to God for many people who had commended themselves to her, that He might in His mercy defend them from all adversities. Hear now a miracle worthy of the greatest admiration: she herself told me how, at the moment when she remembered any one of these in her prayers, she felt virtue or grace go as sensibly from her, as though she had felt a bodily hurt in some joint or limb. Wherefore (as I know by most certain proof) very many were delivered by her prayers from long-standing temptations, perils, and adversities.

Concerning this woman one indubitable miracle was in all men's mouths. She was the daughter of a very poor man; and, while yet in her sixth year, some marvellous inward fervour of the spirit impelled her to beseech her father, even with tears, that he would buy her a psalter. "Nay, daughter," answered he, "how shall I buy thee a psalter, when I am scarce able to earn for thee our daily bread?" She therefore turned her supplications forthwith to the Mother of Christ, and prayed, saying: "O blessed Mary, Mother of Christ, give me this psalter which my father cannot give, and I will be thy servant to all eternity!" In this simple prayer she persevered for a whole year; when lo! the blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her in a dream bearing two psalters and saying, "Take now, my daughter, whichever of the two thou wilt choose." She therefore chose one hastily and with the greatest joy; whereupon the blessed Virgin disappeared; and she, awaking from

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her dream, found nought in her hands: so that she burst into a flood of tears, complaining that the Mother of Christ had deceived her. Her father, hearing this, laughed and comforted her, saying, "Go now, on Sundays and holy-days only, to the mistress who teacheth the psalter to the daughters of rich folk; learn first to read, and then perchance the blessed Virgin will procure thee a psalter." Marvellous to relate, the maiden received his words in simple faith, came to the mistress who taught the daughters of the rich, looked upon a psalter, and read it; and thus the blessed Mary fulfilled in a far more marvellous fashion the promise she had deigned to give. When the honourable and wealthy ladies of the parish saw this, they bought a psalter for the maiden; and, in later days, seeing how eager and devout she was in the service of Christ, they hired a cell hard by the church as an hermitage for her.

### 71. HUGH OF ST VICTOR'S PURGATORY

(Lib. II, c. xvi, p. 174.)

MASTER HUGH was canon of the monastery of Canons Regular of St Victor at Paris; men called him a second Augustine; that is, second in learning to St Augustine himself. Although his life was most laudable, yet in this one thing he wrought somewhat imperfectly, that he received discipline for daily faults neither in secret nor in the Chapter-house with the rest; for he had from his boyhood a most tender skin, and of exceeding delicacy. Seeing therefore that he never conquered in himself, by the exercise of virtue, this his imperfect nature, or rather habit, hear therefore what suffering befel him. In his latest moments, a certain fellow-canon who had loved him very dearly in life adjured him to appear to him in death. "Willingly," answered he, "if only the Master of Life and of Death grant me that power." In the midst of which compact Master Hugh died; and, not long afterwards, he appeared to his expectant comrade, saying, "Lo, here am I; ask what thou wouldst know, for my time is brief." Then the

## HUGH OF ST VICTOR'S PURGATORY

other, with fear indeed yet with no small pleasure, said, "How is it with thee, my dearest friend?" "It is well with me now," answered he, "yet, because in my lifetime I would not accept discipline, therefore there remained scarce one devil in hell who dealt me not some shrewd blow on my way to purgatory."

### 72. PRIEST AND PENITENT

(Lib. II, c. xxx, p. 290.)

WHEN I was in Brussels, the great city of Brabant, there came to me a maiden of lowly birth but comely, who besought me with many tears to have mercy upon her. When therefore I had bidden her tell me what ailed her, then she cried out amidst her sobs: "Alas, wretched girl that I am! for a certain priest would fain have ravished me by force, and began to kiss me against my will; wherefore I smote him in the face with the back of my hand, so that his nose bled; and for this as the clergy now tell me, I must needs go to Rome."<sup>1</sup> Then I, scarce withholding my laughter, yet speaking as in all seriousness, affrighted her as though she had committed a grievous sin; and at length, having made her swear that she would fulfil my bidding, I said, "I command thee, in virtue of thy solemn oath, that if this priest or any other shall attempt to do thee violence with kisses or embraces, then thou shalt smite him sore with thy clenched fist, even to the striking out, if possible, of his eye; and in this matter thou shalt spare no order of men, for it is as lawful for thee to strike in defence of thy chastity as to fight for thy life." With which words I moved all that stood by, and the maiden herself, to vehement laughter and gladness.

<sup>1</sup> "If any man, at the devil's instigation, incur such a guilt of sacrilege as to lay violent hands on a cleric or a monk, let him be laid under the bond of anathema, and let no bishop presume to absolve him (unless on his death bed) until he shall have come personally to the Pope and received his commands."—Decree of Innocent II in the Lateran Council (1139). A few years later, Alexander III decreed that women, children under age, etc., might be absolved from this crime by their own bishops.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

### 73. DISCIPLINE AND HUMILITY

(Lib. II, c. xxxix, p. 313.)

I HAVE heard, from the lips of those who knew the man, of a certain most capable Dean of the Cathedral at Reims, an Englishman by birth, who used to correct his canons severely for their faults. Now it came to pass at that time that the venerable and worthy father in God, Albert, Bishop of Liège, brother to the duke of Brabant, was banished from the empire by the Emperor Henry, whose knights slew him treacherously hard by Reims for righteousness' sake. The venerable Rotard, a man of royal blood, who was then Archdeacon of Reims but already Bishop-Elect of Châlons, came to his funeral with a multitude of nobles but without his wedding-garment. After that the sacred body had been decently laid in the Cathedral choir, then the Dean summoned all the canons to the Chapter-house, and the Bishop-Elect of Châlons with the rest. When all were seated, the Dean said unto him, "As I believe, you have not yet resigned your archdeaconry or canonry." "Not yet," answered the Bishop-Elect. "Rise therefore," said the Dean, "and make satisfaction to this church; prepare your back for discipline in the presence of the Brethren, seeing that you have violated the rule of the Cathedral by coming into the choir among the canons without your wedding-garment." The Bishop-Elect rose forthwith, fell on his face, stripped his back, and accepted a most hearty discipline from the Dean's hands; after which he clothed himself and stood upright, saying publicly to the Dean with all grace of speech, "I thank God and His most merciful Mother, to whom our Cathedral is dedicated, that I leave such an one as you in authority here. I shall ever love this place the better, and shall revere the worthy memory of this severity when I pass to mine own see." With these words he resigned his archdeaconry and canonry, verifying in his own person that common proverb: "The higher the head, the softer the neck." . . .

Hear again that which this same Dean did in the case of his erring nephew. For love and reverence of his uncle, a canonical prebend in the Cathedral of Arras was conferred

## DISCIPLINE AND HUMILITY

upon this clerk; but after a while the clerk was punished for a lapse of the flesh by one year's suspension from his prebend. It chanced now that the Dean his uncle came to Arras upon business; where he was received by the canons with all honour due to such a man. The nephew's fault was related by his fellow-canons, together with the punishment inflicted: to wit, that he should lose his canonical portion for a whole year; but they assured him of the Chapter's willingness freely to release the nephew from this punishment, if the Dean deigned to pray for him. "Wherefore not," replied he; "for he is my sister's son." When therefore the canons were assembled in chapter, he said, "I have heard my nephew's fault, and how he hath been mulcted of his prebend for a year according to the custom of your church: I pray you therefore to submit this fault to my judgment." To this all gladly consented forthwith—for the clerk was (as the vulgar saying hath it) one of those good fellows who had never done well.<sup>1</sup> Then said the Dean, "For your own sakes, beloved sirs, ye have submitted my nephew's fault to my judgment. I do indeed commend and approve your custom whereby ye punish the unchaste for a year. To this year wherein ye have mulcted my nephew of his prebend I add now a second year, so that he may lose all profit of his prebend for two years: and, if he so amend himself meanwhile as worthily to deserve restoration, herein I assent to your benevolent liberality: if not, by the very fact of his misconduct let him be shut out for ever from his prebend and from the bosom of this Cathedral." The canons, hearing this, were marvellously edified by his words, and noised abroad this virtue of the Dean's throughout the whole realm of France.

### 74. A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM

(Lib. II, c. xlvi, p. 352.)

I KNEW a youth in a religious Order in France, who, albeit of most slender learning and dull of wit, yet set himself earnestly to learn, and devoted himself to the study of books.

<sup>1</sup> *Erat enim clericus de bonis sociis illis, quorum nec unus unquam, ut vulgo dicitur, bene fecerat.*

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

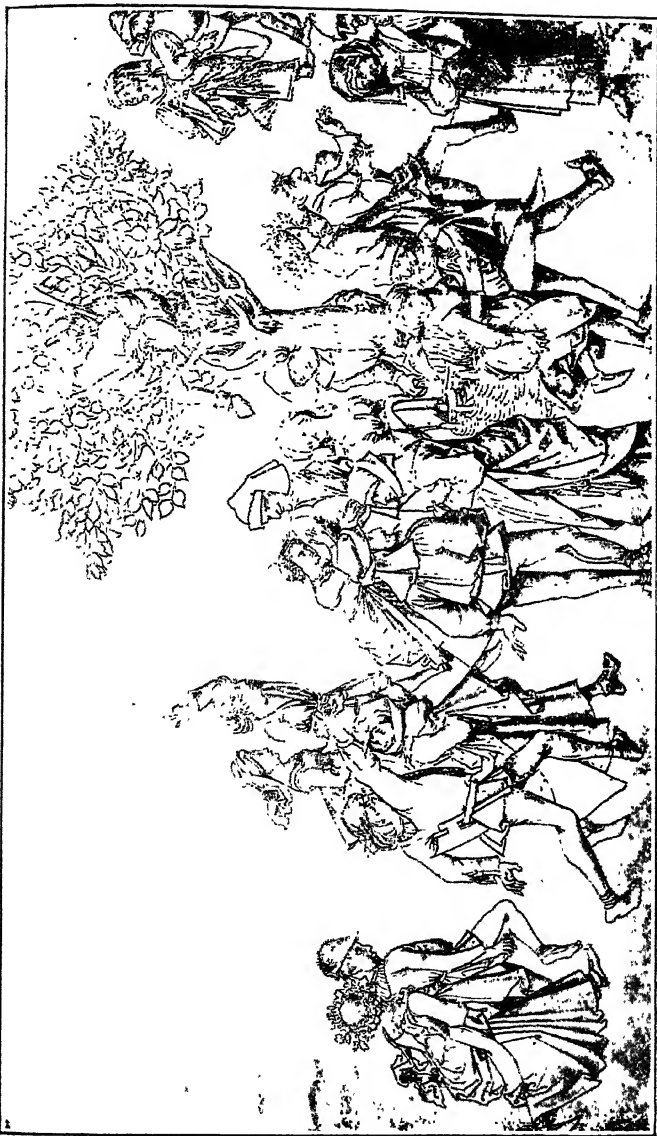
Now he had a custom (as I learned from his own lips) of praying long and earnestly every evening and recalling all that he had learnt during the day; after which he would lie down to sleep. Then within a little while, when his ear caught the sound of the bell that roused the Brethren to the night services, that last recollection of his reading, wherewith he had lain down to rest, would come into his mind; and, taking it with him to mattins in the choir, he would stand there with his eyes shut. Then the whole series of the Scriptures<sup>1</sup> would appear to him as it were a vast, lofty, and long palace, of exceeding beauty; and at that hour he understood them so perfectly that no question—not even the most difficult—seemed insoluble, but he saw all the hidden things of Scripture with the greatest clearness, even as the five fingers of his own hand. If however he opened his eyes, were it but for the twinkling of an eye, then the vision would flee away, nor could he recall any but the most superficial memory of the least fragment thereof; yet, when he shut his eyes again, the vision would return forthwith. Moreover, the vision had this most marvellous character that, while he chanted his psalms with the rest, he lost no whit either of its contemplation or of its admirable sweetness; but his attention was in a fashion divided betwixt the chant and the contemplation, and he enjoyed the fruit of both to an inestimable degree.

### 75. THE SIN OF DANCING

(Lib. II, c. xlix, p. 371.)

THERE is also a third kind of game, namely dancing. How harmful this is, St Augustine teacheth in his book *Of the City of God*, wherein he relateth how Scipio Nasica, the most noble general of all the Romans, removed all benches from the theatre lest the citizens, who had recently triumphed in war

<sup>1</sup> This word, though of course often applied to Holy Writ in the Middle Ages, had at other times a far wider signification. Michelet has noted, in his *Italie* (chap. vi), that prolonged fasting produced on his own mind a similar rapturous clearness of intellect, from which however he could bring nothing tangible back with him into ordinary life.



A COUNTRY DANCE

From a fifteenth century drawing in the Museum at Weimar, reproduced in A. Schultz's *Deutsches Leben*, fig. 192.





## THE SIN OF DANCING

over Carthage the inveterate enemy of their empire, should give themselves over to dances and the sports of Venus, whereby they would become effeminate and envious one of the other, and be moved to war by their intestine discords, even when all outward wars were at an end. This is a most plain and evident token among the dancers, that they circle round towards the left (on which side the accursed goats will be set), and will therefore lose that Kingdom which shall be bestowed by the Judge upon the blessed who are set at His right hand. But if it be better (as St Augustine truly saith) to plough on a Sunday or holy day than to dance; and if servile works, such as ploughing, are a mortal sin upon holy days, therefore it is far more sinful to dance than to plough. Yet those dances which are held at the weddings of the faithful may be partly, though not wholly, excused; since it is right for those folk thus to have the consolation of a moderate joy, who have joined together in the laborious life of matrimony. For, according to the vulgar proverb, that man is worthy to have a little bell hung with a golden chain around his neck, who hath not repented of taking a wife before the year is out.

### 76. A NARROW ESCAPE

(Lib. II, c. liii, p. 406.)

THERE was a certain priest, reverend in his life and his office, who had a special love for St Bartholomew, and fed more poor on his day than at any other time. Now it befel once upon St Bartholomew's day that, after the priest had sung his mass, he found a Devil standing without the church, in the form of a most comely woman in honourable and decent attire; whom he saluted and bade her to dinner with him. She accepted, and entered in, and sat down to table with the priest: yet no poor man was then invited as usual. St Bartholomew therefore, not unmindful of this priest his devotee, and of his long service to him, came and cried at his gate under the form of a poor beggar; but the servant, coming to see who cried there, forbade his entrance and bade him wait for alms until after dinner. To whom the Apostle made answer with a cheerful face, "It

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

is well, I will wait; but meanwhile bid thy master answer and tell me what is that thing which is most marvellous of all in the world, and yet is bounded by a single foot's space." At this the servant smiled and came to his master, relating that question of the beggar. The priest was at a loss for an answer; but the lady his guest whispered in his ear, "It is a man's face, which is so various amid so great a multitude of men that none is shaped like unto another, though all be of the same nature." The priest therefore sent word of the solution of that question; which the Apostle commended and said: "Go once again and ask from me, 'What is most proper to man of all things that he hath?'" The servant therefore came back and propounded the question, to which again the priest could find no answer, until the lady whispered in his ear, "The most proper to man of all things that he hath is sin." The master therefore told this solution to the servant, who bare it back to the gate. Then again the Apostle commended the answer, and said: "Two have now been solved; I will but add yet a third, and then I will hold my peace. Go therefore and ask from me, how many miles the way stretcheth from heaven to hell?" The servant returned and propounded this third question, which again the priest knew not until the lady whispered in his ear, saying: "No man knoweth that better than he who hath often measured that road on his way to hell." When therefore the servant had received this answer and borne it to the gate, then said the Apostle: "Well indeed hath thy master answered. Go therefore and say unto him, 'Who then is he who hath oftentimes measured that road, but this foul demon who whispereth softly in thine ear under the form of a lady at meat with thee, and who would have enticed thee to sin but that I, Bartholomew the Apostle, whom thou hast devoutly served, have mercifully prevented him?'" When the servant had reported this saying, then the Devil vanished forthwith from before his face, in the twinkling of an eye. The priest started up in amazement from the table and ran to the gate that he might see his saviour: but he was nowhere to be found.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This story is told, with slight variations, by a fifteenth-century English preacher (*Mirk's Festial*. E.E.T.S. 1905, p. 9). In this case, the saving saint is Andrew.

## WHO SUPS WITH THE DEVIL—

### 77. WHO SUPS WITH THE DEVIL—

(Lib. ii, c. lvi, p. 447.)

CERTAIN men of note in this world sat drinking in the tavern; and, as they grew warm with wine, they began to talk together of various things; and their talk fell upon that which shall be after this life. Then said one, "We are utterly deceived by those clerks, who say that our souls outlive the destruction of the body!" Hereupon all fell a-laughing; and with this there came in a tall big man, who sat down among them and called for wine, and enquired of the matter of their talk. "We spake of souls," said that fellow aforesaid; "if any man would buy mine, he might have it right good cheap, and ye should all drink away the price with me." Then all laughed again, and the newcomer said: "Thou art the very merchant whom I seek: I am ready to buy it: tell me now thy price." "So and so much," quoth he cheerfully; and they were straightway agreed concerning the price, which the buyer counted out forthwith. Then they filled up their cups again and drank with universal rejoicing, nor did he who had sold his soul show any anxiety for a time. But as evening drew on, the buyer cried: "It is time that each should return home. Give me judgment now, good fellows, before we part; if a man buy a horse tied by a halter, doth not the halter go with the horse, and pass into the buyer's possession?" To this all answered with one voice, "Yea indeed!" Then the buyer seized straightway upon the seller, who sat trembling with horror at this question and answer, and caught him up before all men's eyes, body and soul, into the air, bearing him most indubitably to hell; since he was a devil in man's form. For who else would call himself a merchant of souls, save only he in whose person it was said to Abraham, "Give me the persons,<sup>1</sup> and the rest take to thyself."

<sup>1</sup> The word thus translated in the Douai version is *animas*, literally *souls*.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

For the Blessed Christina von Stommeln (a village near Cologne) see the *Acta Sanctorum*, June 22, and Renan's Essay in *Nouvelles Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 353. Born in 1242, of a well-to-do farmer's family, she became an ecstatic from her very childhood; and at the age of ten she contracted (like the later St Catherine of Siena) a mystic marriage with Christ. Three years later, she left her home and joined the Béguines at Cologne, who sent her back to her parents at the age of eighteen. In 1267, at the height of her local reputation as an ecstatic, she made the acquaintance of a young Dominican Friar, Peter of Sweden, who afterwards achieved distinction in his Order and wrote her biography, but died before her. Peter was then studying at the Dominican Friary of Cologne, one of his brother-friars being Albert the Great, ex-Bishop of Ratisbon and master of St Thomas Aquinas. The greater part of the Life deals with her demoniac temptations (especially to suicide and infidelity in various forms), and with the personal violences inflicted upon her by baffled demons; these sufferings began when she was fifteen and ended only in 1288, a few months after Peter's death. But the narrative contains also many very touching passages; the reader may profitably compare them with the life and experiences of St Lydwine of Schiedam, which Huysmans has lately made accessible to modern readers from medieval sources.

### 78. THE FIRST SIGHT OF A SAINT

(Lib. I, c. i, *AA.SS.* ed. 1743, p. 279.)

So far back as my memory can reach, from the earliest dawn of my childhood, whensoever I heard the lives and manners, the passion and the death of saints, and specially of our Lord Christ and His glorious Mother, then in such hearing I was delighted to the very marrow. . . . In such affections much time passed, and a multitude of days, and more than twenty years, as I think. . . . Then at last the Father of all mercies, visiting me in the bowels of His mercy, and seeing that my merits sufficed not [by themselves], showed me thus unexpectedly a person by whose sight and speech He brought me manifold joys, not only by their present exhibition but also through recording memory. The lady Alfrade, eminent for her illustrious marriage with a spouse of noble birth, fell sick and sent for Brother Walter, her old confessor, who, taking me for his companion, went to her on St Thomas' Eve. We came late; when therefore he had sat down and was hearing the said lady's confession, there came to me as I sat in the same house a certain Béguine named Alice, who asked whence

## THE FIRST SIGHT OF A SAINT

I had come. "From Cologne," quoth I. "Ah," quoth she, "would thou hadst been in our village, and hadst seen the marvels that are done there in a certain Maiden!"

Now it befel on the morrow, at even, that we lodged at the house of the parish priest, for so the said Walter had ordered it; where was at that time the said Maiden also, on account of the necessity of the tribulation that lay upon her; and it was to visit her that my companion, who had been her confessor almost from childhood, came to that house. As we came, therefore, I resolved to keep utter silence concerning whatsoever I might chance to see there unwonted or marvellous, not knowing how such things might be esteemed by those who were there present. So, when I entered into the said house, I found it poorly furnished, and the household sorrowful, and one Maiden, her face covered with a cloak, sitting somewhat apart. When therefore she rose to salute Brother Walter, forthwith the Demon, amid the very words of greeting, cast her backward and struck her head so heavily against the wall that the whole wall was shaken. Whereupon those present were troubled at this event, fearing still more for the tribulation that was to come, which they surely expected according to its wonted course. So while all those present sorrowed for the evil that had befallen, and feared for worse that they awaited, I alone was penetrated with an unwonted joy, and was consoled in my inmost heart, and stood in amazed suspense. . . . Wherefore, to hide my feelings, I busied myself with the household, that is with the Parson and his mother and sisters and other persons present in the same hall, wherein my companion sat somewhat apart with this Maiden, and told her divers examples of the patience of Christ and the Saints. But so strong an impression of joy came upon me, as aforesaid, that even now, eleven years later, it clings to me not only in memory but in certain presence; for in that hour, as I believe, some influence of God was impressed upon me. While I sat thus, hearing the talk of the household, and mingling serious words with jest, yet my eye dwelt all this while—not only my bodily eye, but that intention of my heart—fixed where I knew that Person to be by whose presence I thought myself already a changed man; for I knew well that this

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Person, so dearly beloved in future days, was she by whose grace the Lord had already vouchsafed me so great a gift. So, while I watched closely my companion and this Maiden, I saw that the Devil cast her seven times; four times against the wall at their back, and thrice against a chest at her left hand, with such violence that the chest rang and the wall rattled even afar. . . . And, after we had sat thus awhile, I heard the said Maiden sigh, as though some sudden pain had come upon her: which the women round her heard also, and asked the cause of her sighing: whereunto she answered, "I am hurt in my feet." They sought, and found it so; for in each foot was a wound dropping fresh blood. When therefore she had thus groaned four times in succession, being moved with compassion amid the compassion and tears of those that sat by, who saw new wounds at every groan, I myself also rose and (as I think) looked the last two times, and saw wounds so recent that methinks my sight forestalled the flow of blood, as between the infliction of a wound and the issue of blood there is commonly a brief interval of delay. . . . And when we had said Compline in presence of the said Maiden, with all due rites thereunto pertaining, Brother Walter knelt and laid both hands upon the Maiden's head and recited the Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word," as a defence against the fury of our malignant enemy Leviathan. After which I besought his leave to watch that night with the household; which when he had granted I followed him to the bed, prepared for us in the house itself on account of their reverence for his age and religion; for he was a most religious man, advanced alike in age and in grace, white-headed, fair of face, and of good report among religious and worldly persons alike. Therefore, returning with his leave to this Person aforesaid, that I might comfort her and be comforted by her in the marvels of God, I found in the hall two lights which burned until daybreak, with seven persons who watched all through that night, not in turns but all together, without break or interval or lying down to sleep of any one. For it was needful to watch thus, since each of those present might well fear not only for his goods but also for his life, through the fury and malice of the demons, who raged so grievously and so far beyond the power

## THE FIRST SIGHT OF A SAINT

of human sufferance. So my coming was welcomed with great solace by those that sat by; and, when at their instance I had taken the same place from which my companion had arisen, and sat there for a while in silence, then the Maiden said to me, "What is your name?" "Peter," quoth I. "Good Brother Peter," quoth she, "tell me then somewhat of God, for I gladly hear such, even though I cannot listen closely in this mine urgent need, for which I am truly sorry." So at her instance, and that of the rest, though I spake but imperfectly in the German tongue, yet I related two examples proper for edification, as I thought; the first, how the Blessed Virgin taught a certain Carthusian monk how to serve and love her; and the second, how a Friar Preacher was freed from fifteen years of purgatory through a Mass sung by a certain elder Friar his most familiar friend.

After which, I held my peace awhile: when behold! the Maiden began suddenly to groan more grievously than her wont. When therefore I had asked what ailed her, she answered, "I am wounded hard by the knee." Then, after a brief interval, wherein one might have recited a "Have Mercy on me, O God," she groaned again and withdrew her right hand through the sleeve under her garment, and brought forth an iron nail stained with fresh blood, and laid it in my hand. . . and I felt it hotter to the touch than any human flesh could heat it, whether one had held it in one's hand or in one's bosom. So when midnight was come (as I thought) then I went to my companion to say our Mattins in due course. And while we said the Mattins of the Blessed Virgin, and had begun the Lauds, there was so loud a murmur from the whole household that, breaking off our Mattins in amazement, and forestalling the messenger, we hastened down to the said Person and her companions, and asked what had befallen. So it was told us that the Maiden had been grievously wounded. When therefore my companion had come to her and sat down to comfort her, he found her grievously afflicted and almost fainting: yet after a while her spirits came again and, withdrawing her other hand in the manner above described, she brought forth another nail, freshly bloodstained and heated even as the first, yet far more horrible in shape; which nail



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

she laid in my companion's hand, saying, "Behold that which hath wounded me." When therefore all considered this nail, amazed and shuddering at its horrible aspect, I prayed that it might be given to me as a great gift and a perpetual memorial; which request they granted, and I have kept the nail even to this day, making thereupon a sure sign how deep it had been fixed in the Maiden's thigh; for the flesh that clung thereto, and the blood that stained it, gave a most certain testimony of this fact...so when morning came I returned to Cologne whence I had come; but I knew not whether in my whole life until that hour I had felt my heart so well-disposed; so that I would then have done nothing more gladly than sing a Mass of the Blessed Virgin in thanksgiving for these divine gifts vouchsafed unto me: yet at this time no opportunity of such comfort was granted unto me. For it seemed to me that I might then understand that which is written, "And night shall be my light in my pleasures; but darkness shall not be dark to thee and night shall be light as the day." O happy night, O blessed night! thou wert to me the beginning of divine illuminations which know no difference of night or day.

### 79. THE SAINT'S FRIENDS

(Lib. i, c. iii, p. 286.)

Besides these, Peter enumerates elsewhere (i) John, the village school-master, who helped him to write this life and afterwards studied for the priesthood, and (ii) "Sir John, Parish Priest of Stommeln... a devout man, and of so great chastity that he is said to have died a virgin" (p. 292).

Now she had a wound on the outer side of her hand also, proportionately corresponding to that on the inner side, as though a nail had pierced it through... But, besides the things which I saw, I will narrate here also the things which I heard from her familiar friends, though I never heard her mention such things in a single word... Now these were her chief friends: Hilla von Berg, her kinswoman, the inseparable companion of all her tribulation and consolations, whose face I never saw changed amid weal or woe, a virgin worthy of all praise, fearless in tribulation, cautious in times of gladness

## THE SAINT'S FRIENDS

and prosperity, ever showing forth the maiden in her acts, her bearing and her speech. Her merriment was grave, and her gravity seemed merry, for the even temper of her words and manners. Next to Christina herself, I know not if I have ever seen so pure a maiden; for it seemed to me that she could not sin, and God Himself knoweth that I never marked in her a wanton gesture or sign or word, although (as will be seen hereafter) I conversed often and long with her in all familiarity. The second friend was Gertrude, sister to the parish priest, eminent herself also for honesty of manners, of whom we shall speak again. The third was the blind girl Alice, who had lost her eyes, it is believed, by weeping [in prayer], and who murmured not at their loss; moreover, she had lain seven years in bed and shown a marvellous patience in this failure of all bodily forces; her virtues cannot be expressed in writing, especially to one who knew her in person, for to such her deeds must needs appear above all praise. The fourth was a little maiden of good promise, still wearing the worldly habit, yet bound by a willing and hearty vow of chastity. With all these persons devoted to God . . . I conversed singly and separately, and all with one voice told the same tale concerning the aforesaid miracles.

### 80. SACRED LOVE

Letter of Christina to Peter, then studying at Paris (A.D. 1270, lib. II, c. iv).

To her most beloved Brother in Jesus Christ, Peter the Swede, dwelling at Paris, Christina his daughter or sister in Stommeln, sendeth greeting and whatsoever he may desire of best or most profitable in the Lord. Dearly beloved, you must know that I am inwardly solicitous on your behalf; and, though I have often written to you, yet I cannot refrain from writing still to say how great is my yearning for you, (that is, to have your presence, which was so sweet to me,) and how I long for you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and how I desire that we may see one another in the Kingdom of our God. Wherefore I

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

beseech you instantly that, if by any means you can procure it, you may dwell some time at Cologne. Moreover, I can never suffice to thank you for the consolation sent to me in your letters, which was so sweet to me that I pray God may reward you to all eternity. Again, concerning that which you lately wrote to me, how you have long desired to know of my state, and that it should be noted in the book,<sup>1</sup> you must know that I purpose this so far as I can, and herein you have the first claim, for I could do this well for none [other] under heaven. Wherefore I promise you this, for I trust in you who have been wont to keep me in all my ways as carefully as I have kept myself. Above all these things, most faithful friend, I beseech you to procure me as many intercessors as you may, and do you intercede for me, as I have confidence in your prayers; for sore distress lieth on me, for every night I am in such suffering that I scarce know how to live; for I am afflicted with such weariness of soul that meseemeth worldly folk have a better life than mine, and I despair of God, though that be pain and grief to me. Wherein I am more tormented than I care to write to you at present; and I strive against it, by God's help, even to the shedding of blood from my nose and mouth: yet I take delight in no good, wherefore have pity upon me! I am sick in the body, in the breast, in the head; yet I have had no outward pain since Christmastide. On the fourth day after the First Sunday in Lent, a multitude of demons came into my chamber and (for I heard all from the beginning) one began telling the other how much harm they had done me, and in which temptations they had conquered, and in which they had been conquered, and what had been their punishment. At length they departed and left there fragments of a fur garment which they had burned.<sup>2</sup> I beseech you from the bottom of my heart, write me often of your own state; for if you knew what a joy it would be to me to see your letters, you would do this gladly. My father and my mother salute you. I beseech you, as they beseech you through me, pray for them.

<sup>1</sup> Christina kept a sort of journal of her experiences.

<sup>2</sup> Like very many other visionaries, Christina was always haunted by illusions of fire and wounds.

## THE ANSWER

### 81. THE ANSWER

To this Peter wrote two letters in reply, the second of which follows here.

To Christina his dearest sister in the bowels of mercy of Christ Jesus, and worthy of especial love, Brother Peter sendeth greeting, by profession a Friar Preacher, but in fact and deed a vile and humble sinner, and prayeth that she may happily purchase to herself eternal salvation in the spirit of saving grace, and sweetly meditate thereon, finding continual sweet consolation therein and thereby. You asked me to send you word of my state; nay, but your very prayer hath pierced to the inmost recesses of my heart; wherefore I give you to know that, albeit by your presence I was once inwardly comforted and revived to my very marrow by God who dwelleth with you, and enlightened to the very inmost recesses of my heart, if I may so say, and inflamed with fire from heaven; yet I confess, and thank God in confessing it, that sometimes, though perchance too seldom, the memory of you brings me that profit which your presence was wont to bring; yet so much the less by all the difference that there is between memory and presence, between a similitude and the thing itself which it represents! Yet (to satisfy your prayer) know that at Paris we have most devout novices, most learned students, most religious Brethren, and most kindly Prelates, among whom, as stones of fire, beautiful men, I myself converse as the reproach of men and the outcast of the people; so that, as they are such of whom the world is not worthy, I am one who is not worthy of the world. O therefore, dearest Virgin of Christ, Christina, who preachest the love of Christ by thy very name and showest it forth in thy manners, have pity upon me, who am arid amidst this exceeding devotion of such holy men, cold amidst the burning love of so many, remiss amid their so strenuous conversation, lax beside their strict religion, yet who fear not to converse with them. If therefore there be in you any consolation of mind, if any compassion, if any bowels of mercy, if any affection of charity, pray to God that He may deign by His grace to awaken me from this torpor

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

of insensibility, this lukewarmness of negligence, this loitering drowsiness of mine.

Such then is my daily round, my quotidian fever, my most dolorous misery. Yet, though my heart be hardened, my senses blunted, my affections chilled, yet am I compelled (as the Apostle saith) to rejoice with them that rejoice, or at least to put a joyful face over my sorrow of heart. Know therefore that, though my hours of sunlight be rare and fleeting, yet the serener day doth sometimes shine upon me, a healthier air breathes round me, a more cheerful sun breaks forth, a sweeter devotion is felt in my heart, and especially when I handle and bear in my hands the Sun of Righteousness so often as the bodily sun ariseth. For then my heart warms a little, and my eyes grow moist, and my understanding clear, and the world vile; every earthly delight vanishes, every temptation is dumb, all inordinate affection is at rest. "Then," (as saith the Poet) "a new race is sent down from the height of heaven, then returneth the Virgin also."<sup>1</sup> Alas, beloved, what word have I said? and what do I remember? for all these things have passed away like a shadow, leaving scarce a memory behind, and altogether withdrawing their presence. O how sweet and how joyful it would be to linger amid such delights, to be sated with such feasts, to revel in such banquets, were it not that sloth impedes, negligence holds back, and the multitude of sins stands between! Yet I hope that these and the like hindrances to devotion, whereof I mourn to feel so many in myself, will vanish by your compassion.

[Extract from a letter of one of Peter's fellow-students first at Cologne and now at Paris, lib. v, c. i.]

### 82. AN UNDERGRADUATE'S LETTER

To the devout Virgin of Christ, and his own dearly-beloved in the Lord, Christina of Stommeln, Brother Maurice, student in the convent of the Friars Preachers at Paris, wishes health and the consolation of the Holy Ghost. To write to you is no

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Ecl.* iv, 6, 7, slightly misquoted to give it a Christian sense.

## AN UNDERGRADUATE'S LETTER

ungrateful task, but one truly full of joy, since I delight in speaking with you as with mine own heart. But, since I had no matter of writing, fearing the perils of the journey for letters, especially when directed to women, and distracted by divers business and occupations, I have so long omitted to answer your letter. . . . Now of mine own state—your special friend, but in secret “for fear of the Jews”—know that, passing through fire and water, and suffering many tribulations in body and soul, (as I think you have heard from the Brethren) I came to Paris on St Maurice’s day, where by reason of the mutation and novelty of my way of life I have never remained in one stay, but have been vexed with divers infirmities all winter through until after Easter; from all which, by God’s grace and loving care of me, I was fully freed and cured before the Feast of the Ascension; and now I am fully wont to eat our eggs, more corrupt and fewer in quantity than those eggs of the Eifel which are supplied to our Brethren in Cologne;<sup>1</sup> more anxious in this care, thinking over the fresh eggs and pot-herbs, when we were wont to sit beside the fleshpot, and see, and eat thereof. Oftentimes indeed I go down (though not in body) to see your Egypt of Stommeln; and, if I might, even in body would I come down, and would oftentimes have come down, and many other companions with me, even though the village were ten good miles further from Paris than it is from Cologne! But enough of this! I pray you, vouchsafe to let me know of your state, and that of your brethren—and you, Sir Parish Priest,<sup>2</sup> of your own and your mother’s and your household’s—as soon as ye may, that I may send word to Brother Peter; for I have messengers, as I believe, who will be going to Sweden. Fare ye well ever in the Lord, remembering me in your prayers (according to your promise, and the confidence which I have in you), when you speak secretly in the bed-chamber to Jesus Christ your Spouse. Salute from me your father and mother and sisters, etc. I would not that you should show this letter to any, lest through sinister interpretations any blame should

<sup>1</sup> Some readers will remember Erasmus’ description of Paris university eggs.

<sup>2</sup> It is evident from many indications that Christina wrote not with her own hand, but through the Priest and the Schoolmaster.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

fall on the writer. Bid the lady Beatrice make ready fresh eggs for the Brethren returning from the General Chapter, and her condiment of new cheeses,<sup>1</sup> and that she should remember me when it is well with her among the Béguines. Given on the day of Saints Vitus and Modestus. Farewell, and pray for me.

### 83. TROUBLES AND TRIALS

Christina to Peter, who has now come back to Sweden and stands high in his Order (A.D. 1272, lib. II, c. vi, p. 320).

To her dear, her dearer, her dearest Brother Peter, Lector of Skenninge, his own Christina von Stommeln sends salutations in Him Who is our true Salvation. After your departure, being long without my Beloved, I was so affected that great gout of blood, as many saw, came from my mouth. I complain now of my friends, in whose trouble I am afflicted. You must know my grief in the matter of my well-beloved lord the Prior of Braunweiler, who died after the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, committing himself to me in his last sickness with such pitiful words as I cannot relate without weeping. This same Prior desired me to write that you also might intercede for him; and I too beg for him that, even as I am confident you would do for me if I were to die, so you should do the same for his soul; for you know not how much good he did for me in his lifetime. After this, [my confessor] Brother Gerard von Greifen departed and was made Prior at Coblenz, to heap up the measure of my sorrows; and thus almost all my friends have left me.

Moreover there hath been other and most grievous trouble with my remaining friends and my parents, who are fallen into such poverty that my father, by reason of his standing surety between Jews and Christians, hath lost all that he had; where-

<sup>1</sup> To this the learned Jesuit editor notes "above the word *cheeses* is written *cherries*, from which our Flemish peasants make a most excellent condiment which they keep a whole year; meanwhile I note so clear a difference of style and spirit between this letter and Brother Peter's, that I do not wonder how Christina, so earnest and so intent on divine things alone, should be less pleased with the former than with the latter."

## TROUBLES AND TRIALS

fore he dares not stay here, but is departed from the village three months since. Consider therefore, my well-beloved, how great was my tribulation when my father, who had done me so much kindness, was thus stripped of all his goods and departed! And when he was at Cologne, I must needs cumber myself with his business and go to him; and when I saw his affliction I shed many tears. On Innocents' Day, when my mother must needs go to Cologne to see my father, she fell from the cart and broke her arm and took a grievous wound in the head, and so is departed to Cologne. This again was a grievous tribulation to me; for she must needs keep her bed a long while and spend much money; and with all this she had a sharp fever, and your Brethren anointed her; moreover she broke out in boils and blains so that no man knew her face. There then she stayed seven weeks long in all these afflictions; wherefore I myself went to Cologne immediately after Christmastide, though I could not put on my shoes by reason of my green wounds, in bitter cold and in great torment of body and mind.<sup>1</sup> And when at last I returned, I found our farm and house deserted; and here I dwelt like a poor outcast wretch, finding nothing in the place; and so I must needs go hither and thither in all pain.

Such are the pains with which I am filled to-day, and I await still worse; yet I must needs cumber myself with business, and all day long I expect a separation between us. Wherefore, dearly beloved, I instantly beseech and warn you, that you may vouchsafe to intercede for me and on my behalf: (for, as you now already know, grievous necessity is laid upon me), that God may vouchsafe to keep me without sin in these tribulations, nor any the more withdraw His grace by reason of my distraction; that my tribulation may at last be changed to joy which no man can take from me. This Lententide, wherein I write you this letter, you must know that all grace hath been taken away from me, and all delight in prayer, and withal I have a grievous temptation of heart. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> During the Advent weeks, the devil had more than once pierced her feet with green withies, plaited them together, and hung her naked by night on a tree in the garden! "That same tree" (notes Peter with solemn reverence) "I have seen with mine own eyes."



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

when I pray, then cometh the Devil in the likeness of a great spider, as great as an egg, flying in my face and molesting me. Already he hath set boils in my finger, whereof I fear I shall suffer yet more from this spider. Dearly beloved, again I beseech you, if so it may be, vouchsafe now to see me as soon as you may; for I need your counsel and would gladly see your face. Farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, among other diabolical temptations, Christina was sometimes tormented by visions of trusted friends who came and told her lies; of letters from Peter, brought by devils who grinned and vanished with horrible sounds or smells (380, 444). At last in 1279 (hearing how the house had suddenly fallen down about Christina's ears, and how she herself suffered grievous tribulation from the parish priest's mother, who accused her of embezzlement) Peter obtained leave from his Provincial to go to Cologne.

### 84. BALM IN GILEAD

(Lib. II, c. I, § 4.)

So with God's help, and further reinforced (as I most certainly hope) by the merits of Christina, all my purposes fell out prosperously; and I found by experience that the Poet saith true: "Importunate love conquers everything."<sup>1</sup> . . . At length, on the Octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, we came to Stommeln, the place for which we had yearned, fair in God's sight with many gifts, and specially for the devotion of those that dwelt there. As we drew near the village, we saw from afar how the people came away from Mass, for it was the sixth day of the week; and at last we saw two Béguines, and I said to my companion Folquin, "See where Christina goeth!" for he also yearned to see her. Now Christina could be discerned from the rest; for, even as she was more religious in her manner of life and devouter in her aspect, so also was she graver in her walk, and, to be brief, from every act of hers, or gesture, or motion, or step, there shone forth a certain special grace, so that whosoever devoutly

<sup>1</sup> *Amor omnia vincit improbus*, parodied from Virgil. Many similar passages were borrowed and adapted from the heathen poets by the medieval mystics. It will be remembered that Chaucer's Prioress bore on her brooch *Amor vincit omnia*.

## BALM IN GILEAD

considered her manners could not doubt that God's grace and presence was with her and in her. So when we had come to the parish priest's house, to get the things necessary for our Mass, there stood the wife of the bell-ringer and looked hard at me, and said at last, "What is your name?" "Peter," quoth I. "Whence come you?" "From Sweden." Then she leapt forth into the street and began to cry with a loud voice, "Christina, Christina! come back, if you would fain hear a Mass." We too therefore went out into the street and met Christina returning. When I had saluted her, she stood as it were in stupor of heart, scarce knowing what to answer. At last she said, "Whence come ye?" and I answered, "The Lord God hath sent me hither." And so, when my companion and I had said our Masses, we ate with Christina in the inner room, by the hospitality of Master John [the school-master], a most devout man: but the parish priest also bare us company. On the morrow, after Vespers, when at Christina's prayer I had preached on that text, "Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom," she herself fell into such a transport of mind that she could neither sup nor speak. . . . At length, when she was somewhat recovered, Master John and Alice led her to her own lodging; and once, when I went by her side, she asked who I was: and they told her how I was Brother Peter. Then she said, "Brother Peter, if thou wilt speak of God, thou art welcome; otherwise, thou mayest quickly do thy business and depart; for otherwise we shall soon wax weary of thee."<sup>1</sup> So she remained all that night in this devotion: but on the morrow, those who had heard this began to repeat it to her, as it were complaining that some one had insulted me. Whereunto she replied, "Truly, whosoever said that was over-bold": for she had no recollection of that which she had said the evening before. We therefore were three days in Stommeln, and thus we came to Cologne, much edified and comforted by Christina's presence. . . . Here I dwelt well-nigh a month. . . . and here I procured nine heads of the [Eleven Thousand] Virgins, and one of the Theban Legion,

<sup>1</sup> The Devil had more than once come to her in the form of Peter or other spiritual friends, seeking to dissuade her from mortifications and special devotions.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

by the kind offices of the Brethren at Cologne, and with the help of Brother Folquin.

[About Michaelmas we paid another visit to Stommeln.] On the fourth day of the week, when all the Béguines of Stommeln were come together, and had made an excellent dinner for Brother Folquin and me, (at which the parish priest was present, and Gerard the Advocate's son, and Master John,) and when after dinner I had made a discourse concerning spiritual joy on the text, "Rejoice, O Jerusalem," then I began to talk specially with Christina in the church, in the presence of many others, concerning a certain miracle told by Brother Folquin, how the Priest espoused St Agnes with a ring,<sup>1</sup> and her image accepted it and held forth its finger from the wall, whereon the ring abideth still unto this day; for when this was told I saw in Christina evident signs of joy, and heard her saying: "I was glad and overjoyed to hear that instance"; and, when I had enquired what this speech might signify, she added: "Because I know that there is in our case some similitude of this thing." Wherefore I earnestly insisted upon her, and after many words she said: "I will tell thee a secret which I have never yet revealed to living man. From my very infancy I have known you<sup>2</sup> in the spirit, and discerned your face and voice, and loved you more than all men, so that I have vehemently feared lest some tribulation of temptation might arise hence for a time. For never in my prayers could I separate your person from mine own intention, but needs pray as much for you as for myself; and in all my tribulations I have ever had you for my fellow. When therefore I for a long time sought the cause thereof with supplications before God, to know whether it were of Him, then on St Agnes' day I was certified of this matter;<sup>3</sup> for in my Communion a ring was given visibly unto me, and signed upon my finger. And when you first saluted me, and I first saw you, then I discerned thy voice and recognized thy face clearly, and was sore amazed

<sup>1</sup> The story is in the *Golden Legend* (Temple Classics, vol. II, p. 251).

<sup>2</sup> Here and elsewhere I follow the *thee* and *you* of the original.

<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that this day and its eve were among the traditional times at which village girls hoped to dream of their future husbands; this idea would be in the air among the worldly folk of Stommeln at the time.

## BALM IN GILEAD

and rejoiced when the Lord appeared unto me. . . . There are very many proofs of this thing, given me from God, which I cannot for shamefastness reveal unto thee; for I have often received the figure of a ring in assurance thereof." Now I will here insert what I have heard from others concerning this ring. John, the parish priest, of pious memory, said that the figure of a ring was not painted on her finger, but inscribed on her flesh with sundry ornaments. For at times it had on its boss the figure of a cross, at other times it was marked in with the most glorious name of Jesus Christ, now in Hebrew letters, now in Greek, again in Latin. Master John told me the same. And when I said to her, "Methinks you had the ring on that same finger whereon I have a token of our mutual love," she besought me most humbly never to speak thereof to Master John.<sup>1</sup> Here therefore our colloquy ended, for we parted in mutual comfort, and were certified of that whereof we had doubted before. Whereof I know not how to speak or to write, save by praising God for all the good things which He hath vouchsafed to us. . . . So on the evening of the day before our final departure from Stommeln, while Christina was saying her vespers and commending our journey to God, she received much consolation, so that she could not conceal it; for at supper she was more joyful than her wont. When therefore after supper I had enquired of the cause, she said, "For these two days past I have been most grievously afflicted for your departure; and even now, as I said Vespers under a certain tree, and commended you to God in much bitterness of heart, then said the Lord unto me, 'Be not troubled; I was with Brother Peter in his coming, and I will be his guide in returning'; and He said more to me, whereby I am consoled, adding among other things, 'I have planted your mutual love in Myself, and there will I keep it.'" Wherefore I took this occasion and began to speak of the sweetness of divine love; and Christina fainted so sore in her devotion that she withdrew from me and was rapt altogether from her senses, and lay

<sup>1</sup> One day she had a vision of Peter sitting by her side, with a resplendent ring on his finger, "on which was written: 'Jesus Christ is your [*vestrum*, plural] eternal faith [or troth]': but what was written on the inner side of that ring she would not divulge." p. 442, § 51.

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without motion, stiffened in all her limbs. But early on the morrow, the feast of SS. Crispin and Crispinian, we said our Masses and ate our dinner; and then, when I had delivered a discourse on the text "Turn, O my soul, unto thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee," we bade farewell to Christina and her fellows and went on our way, each commending the other to the Lord.

The Letters continued, and Peter probably revisited Christina once more in 1287, on his way back from the Chapter General at Bordeaux. He wrote from Louvain (June 1): "Though importunate Love conquers all, yet he worketh not without labour and sorrow, as I find in myself at this present time. For on this long pilgrimage, not less perilous than wearisome, undertaken for your love, I have suffered manifold labours and no small bodily pain in divers members.... I hope to God, though I halt sore of my left foot, to see you next week, and I pray that you may be as well in health as I desire." The next letter, probably written in 1288, is from Folquin, announcing briefly how "that reverend father of ours, Brother Peter, late Prior and Lector of our convent, migrated in Lententide to the Lord; whose soul I commend most earnestly to your holy prayers." The letters end here: but a contemporary life of the Saint gives us a few more particulars.

### 85. LAST DAYS

(*AA.SS.* June, vol. iv, ed. 1707, p. 454.)

FOR a whole year and a half she ate nothing but ginger, which was about the time of the battle of Worringen, between the lord Siegfried, Bishop of Cologne, and John Duke of Brabant; in which battle the Lord of Berg escaped death by this Virgin's intercession... moreover she interceded for certain lords of Luxemburg and very many others, who at her prayers and intercession escaped the pains of hell by God's mercy. These innumerable and incomprehensible kinds of torments which I have above written, she had obtained grace from the Lord to suffer for the sake of those men and others; for in those days, for a whole year and a half, the demons salted<sup>1</sup> her like a fish that is to be baked; after which she had issues of blood, and pain, so that at least two linen cloths daily were soaked

<sup>1</sup> If we may read *salsabant* for the *saltabant* of the text. Otherwise I suppose we must interpret *saltabant* as some frying or grilling operation, like *sauter* in modern French.

## LAST DAYS

through and through with her blood. . . . This was the last pain which the demons inflicted upon Christina, the Spouse of Christ: so that after the battle of Woringen all persecution of the Devil ceased altogether.

At this time she was in her 47th year, and had no doubt learned the death of Peter, whose naïve admiration had hitherto encouraged the hysterical excesses of her earlier mysticism. The advanced age to which she lived (70) tends to corroborate the biographer's assurance that her later years were tranquil.

The following are from the collection of *Latin Stories* published by T. Wright for the Percy Society in 1842. They are from preachers' manuals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to be used as illustrations in sermons.

### 86. GRIN AND BEAR IT

(p. 24.)

A CERTAIN woman complained to a witch of her husband, that he ill-treated her contrary to her deserts. The witch said: "I will give thee a remedy: take with thee cheese, wine, and a penny, and go lay them down in yonder forest, saying thus:

So wist I the broom  
That is me for to do'n!  
I have the worst husband  
That is in any land.

Whereunto the witch, hid among the thorn-bushes, answered thus:

If thy husband is ill,  
Hold thy tongue still!

### 87. PSALM-SKIPPERS

(p. 44.)

A CERTAIN holy father, seeing the devil sore laden with a sack that was well-nigh filled, adjured him to say what he bore there. "I bear," said he, "the syllables cut off from the reading

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

and the verses of the psalms which these clergy here stole last night." Then said the saint, "What is thy name?" "Tityvillus," answered the demon. Wherefore the saint made that verse:—

Fragmina Psalmorum Tytyvillus colligit horum.<sup>1</sup>

### 88. THE BLASPHEMER'S REWARD

(p. 66.)

IN the town called Château en Brie, two ribalds played at hazard in the church porch, wherein was a great image of the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus on her lap, all carved in stone. One of these fellows, therefore, losing at the game, blasphemed the Blessed Virgin, omitting none of her members, but enumerating all both outward and inward. When therefore he lost all the more, then he dishonoured still more this Mother of Mercy and Shamefastness with his affronts, daring to call her a harlot, and to invent unheard-of lies against her. At last, having lost all, he fell into a fury, and, rising to his feet, seized a stone which he hurled at the image, and broke the left arm wherewith she held her Child. Then, as the Boy seemed about to fall, she stretched forth her right arm by the marvellous power of God, and caught her Child. Moreover, blood flowed in abundance from her left arm, which men and women caught and laid up with all diligence. But the sacrilegious wretch was seized with a devil; and, seeing that he had blasphemed the bowels of the spotless Virgin, therefore in that same place, and in the eyes of all the people, his own bowels gushed foully forth as a worthy end to his unworthy life.

<sup>1</sup> The poem of which this verse forms part is given in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. 1, p. 287. It runs in English, "These are they who wickedly corrupt the holy psalms: the dangler, the gasper, the leaper, the galloper, the dragger, the mumblor, the forskipper, the forerunner, and the overleaper: Tutivillius collecteth the fragments of these men's words."

## THE HOST MALTREATED

### 89. THE HOST MALTREATED

(p. 133.)

AT Pinchbeck in Holland [Lincs.], in the year of our Lord, 1343, it befel that a certain woman went to market with two bushels of corn; on which day she could get but twelve pence for her corn, whereas she would fain have had fourteen pence; wherefore she left the corn in a friend's house until another day. On that day she came again into the market, and then she could but get ten pence for her corn. Then she said: "O Lord God, this hast Thou done to me! the other day I might have had twelve pence, and to-day no more than ten; I will do Thee as much evil and shame as Thou hast brought loss upon me!" So at Eastertide she came to church to take Christ's Body; which she let fall from her mouth into her hand, so that none might see or know; then she laid it in her chest and took a loathly toad and laid him on the Host, and shut down the chest. That night, as her husband came to bed, he heard in his room the wailing of a child, and said to his wife: "I hear a child crying." "Nay," said she, "but it is a fantasy of thine own brain": and so she fell asleep. The man awoke in the morning; and, hearing the wails as before, he said: "In truth there is a child in the room": and again she denied it. The man sought all round the house; and, coming at last to the chest, he seemed to hear the wailing from thence. He required the key; but she (as she said) knew not where it might be. Then he brake the chest, and found a little wailing child therein with a toad; and whensoever the toad drew near to the child, he cried aloud and waved it away with his hand. Then the man, being amazed, straitly questioned his wife, who told him the truth; wherefore he sent for the priest, that he himself might confess all and receive [the communion], after which it returned to its former shape. But she said that she could not find it in her heart to take the communion heartily; nevertheless, at her goodman's prayer, she took it into her mouth; and, when the priest offered Christ's Body to her lips, a coal-black toad leapt in instead, and her body was turned to



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blackness, and she gave up the ghost, and her husband let burn her forthwith. So therefore, after this morsel, Satan entered into her [as into Judas].

The following three stories are from a *Liber Exemplorum*, or book of illustrations for sermons, recently edited by Prof. A. G. Little for the British Society of Franciscan Studies. The author, who wrote about 1275, had been a fellow-student of Roger Bacon at the Franciscan friary in Paris: "it is perhaps not irrelevant to point out that his only two references to his student life in Paris are concerned with stories of magic." He was apparently a Warwickshire man, and had passed some years in Irish friaries: several of the anecdotes are drawn from his own experiences.

### 90. TIT FOR TAT

(p. 30.)

ONE more instance of the loving-kindness of the glorious Virgin I found in an ancient sermon, and certainly it should not be despised. A certain poor woman loved the Blessed Virgin, decking her image with roses and lilies and such ornaments as she could find. It befel that her son was taken and hanged. The woman, in the bitterness of her soul, went to the image of the Blessed Virgin and besought her to restore her son; and, seeing that she recovered not her son as soon as she wished, she said: "Is this then the price of service to thee, that thou succourest me not in my need?" Then, as though madened by the excess of her grief, she said: "If thou restore me not my son, I will take away thy Son." And, as she reached out her hand impetuously to bear away the image of the little Babe, behold! her son stood by her and seized her cloak and cried, "What dost thou, Mother? Hast thou lost thy senses? Behold, the Mother of God hath restored me to thee." So the mother rejoiced to recover her son.

### 91. VENGEANCE DEFERRED

(p. 65.)

A CERTAIN great lady being left a widow by the death of her husband, and wooed by many in marriage, one of her many suitors was comely to see, doughty of his body, practised and

## VENGEANCE DEFERRED

renowned in arms, but poor. When, therefore, he besought her instantly, seeking to bend that lady's mind to consent to the marriage, seeing also that his body pleased her while his poverty (according to the way of the world) displeased her, she gave him one day the following answer: "Beloved sir, how could I, being such a lady as I am, take thee who art so poor a man and of so slender substance? Not thy person displeaseth me but thy poverty; if thou hadst a fief I would gladly take thee." Hearing which the noble departed, and laid wait in a certain public way whereby the merchants were wont to pass; until, finding a merchant that went by with great riches, he slew him and carried away all his goods. Thus he came to sudden wealth and, being raised from his poverty to glory, he went to the lady, showed her his wealth, and besought that she would deign to receive him. She, amazed at his so sudden fortune, asked him how he had come to so great riches; nor would she admit his prayer until he told her the truth. So sore was he pricked with love for this lady that he dared not offend her in anything, but clean confessed the whole matter. She, having heard his tale, bade him go to the place where the dead man lay, if he would have her hand, and watch there one whole night long. He did according to her bidding; and, as he kept earnest watch, he saw how in the silence of the night a storm arose, and the dead man sat up and stretched out his hands to the heaven and prayed to the Lord, saying, "Lord, Who art the just judge of all, Thou knowest how unjustly I died! If it be Thy will, do justice now." Then from above there came a rushing mighty voice that said: "This day thirty years, thou shalt be avenged." With that the dead man fell back again to the earth; and the murderer went back and told his lady all that he had seen and heard. But she, thinking within herself that she would atone for the deed by penance before the time appointed, took him for her husband; and from thenceforth they grew daily in wealth and worldly glory. They waxed and increased with many happy children, and bound their family by marriages to the noblest of their neighbours. So when the time began to glide by, year by year, the lady solicited her husband many times to do his penance; but he, blinded by the glory of this world, put it off so long that year

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

after year stole away, and at last the thirtieth came. When therefore the appointed day of vengeance was at hand, then that nobleman made great preparations in one of his castles, and invited all his friends for that day to a feast. When therefore they were all assembled, he saw to it that none should enter from whom he might fear aught. So, while all feasted and made merry, a fiddler came to the door and besought admittance after the wont of such men. The porter, daring to admit no man without leave, announced the fiddler to his lord, who cried: "Let him in!" So he came in, and in due time would fain have done his office, and tuned his fiddle to a song: but one crept up in jest and greased the strings of his fiddle-bow with lard or some other fat. Then the fiddler caught up his bow and would have drawn it over the strings; but all was dumb, for the grease smothered the melody. What then could the poor fiddler do? Utterly confounded, he thrust his viol into the bag, rose from his seat, and hastened forth from the castle. He was already gone some distance from the spot, when he was aware that he had lost one of his gloves; and, looking anxiously around, as we do at such times, he turned by chance towards the place whence he had come: when lo! he saw naught there but the level earth. Amazed at the sight, he retraced his steps to the place where that castle had been; yet here again he found a level flat, and in the midst a fountain, by the side whereof lay his glove: for the castle and all that was therein had been swallowed up by the earth. In truth the Lord showed plainly by this example that He is a patient payer; if therefore, while time glideth by, vengeance draweth near by God's just judgment, then "delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day."

This example was preached by Brother Hugh de Sutton in the parts over sea;<sup>1</sup> who told how he knew it by hearsay; and, when he had thus told the story with that reservation, then said one of his congregation: "Brother, you may tell that story without misgiving; for I know the very place where it came to pass."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This phrase generally means "in Palestine."

<sup>2</sup> For two curious Welsh parallels to this story see Rhys' *Celtic Folklore*, pp. 73 and 403, or the summaries printed by Prof. Little in his note. The whole story is told, with slight variations in Mirk's *Festial* (E.E.T.S. 1905, p. 88).

## A SHORT WAY WITH ALL DEVILS

### 92. A SHORT WAY WITH ALL DEVILS

(p. 85.)

FOR the commendation of faith and the buffeting of infidelity or infirm belief, methinks that example is most pertinent which was told me by Brother Thomas O'Quinn, of our Order, a good and faithful man of great learning, who was even chosen to the bishopric of Cloyne, after that he had served God sedulously for very many years in poverty and humility with true and edifying exhortation.<sup>1</sup> When he was already a bishop, he told me a story of his own life, saying: "In the days when I worked as a Preacher in our Order, I went once to preach in Connaught. And behold! in those days there was a marvellous and miserable plague in the diocese of Clonfert; for, when men went to their ploughs or walked elsewhere in the fields or the forests, then (as they told me) they were accustomed to see whole armies of demons that passed by and sometimes fought one with another. Such as saw these visions were forthwith smitten with sickness and disease, languishing and taking to their beds with all weakness of body; and many died miserably. When I heard this" (quoth the Bishop) "then I called the people together in no small multitude, and preached the word of God, saying among other things: 'Ye have now this great plague among you, and it is caused by the demons whom very many of you see oftentimes in these parts. Know ye wherefore the devils have power to bring such evils upon us? This is certainly for no other cause than for your want of faith. For ye fear their power too sore, not believing or thinking or trusting that the Lord will defend you and guard you against all hurt of theirs. Therefore doth the Lord suffer them to have this power of doing you the evil which they now work. If ye had stout faith, and if ye believed firmly that the devils have no power but in so far as the Lord suffereth, and if ye would amend your lives, beseeching God instantly to defend you from their wilds, then ye may be sure that they

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Little notes that, already in 1244, O'Quinn had been proposed for the bishopric of Elphin, but not elected. Being the son of a priest, he had to procure a papal dispensation before he could accept the bishopric of Cloyne; he died in 1279.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

would have no power to hurt you.' 'Why!' quoth he, 'Ye see and know that we friars are the men who do most in this world against the devils, and say most harm of them; and here stand I, saying and preaching all this evil of them; and I say to them now, I wish they would come to me and do unto me even as they may! Let the demons come if they dare,' quoth he; 'let them come all at once! Wherefore is it that they come not? What are they about? Where are they? I defy and insult them in these words, over and over again, in the ears of the whole people.' And behold! from that time forth the demons vanished, so that they never appeared again in that land, and forthwith that plague ceased which had so long and so miserably raged among the people. Ye see how little the devils can do in the face of firm faith, when all their efforts were baffled by the defiant challenge of a single poor friar, backed up by an unshaken belief."

### 93. THE RESOURCEFUL JONGLEUR

Jean de Beaume was a Dominican friar who died about 1312. The following anecdote from one of his sermons is recorded in the *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, vol. XXVII, p. 154.

IN my country there was a jongleur named Roland, who grew old and lost favour, so that his tricks ceased to divert. Yet he repaired to all the feasts; and, when the old man appeared at a wedding, the women would laugh and say, "Hold out thy bowl, Roland, and we will give thee somewhat": whereat he would hold his bowl and they would give him alms. Now it befel one day that a silver cup was lost, and the men of the household accused him of the theft, saying: "There is none here whom we can suspect, for all are rich; but we accuse thee, who alone art poor." As Roland swore that they accused him falsely: "Then," cried the others, "thou must prove thine innocence by the ordeal of hot iron." "Yea, let heat the iron." The bar heated, they proffered it to the jongleur, who held out his bowl to receive it, saying, "lay it there." "Nay," said they, "but thou must needs touch with thine

## THE RESOURCEFUL JONGLEUR

hand, since thou claimest to be innocent." To which he replied, "Ye therefore swear likewise to your innocence, and if ye will that I believe you, touch the iron first; I will touch after you, but by no means before!" Thus is it with the preacher who would fain persuade his hearers to gain salvation by works of charity; he must first grasp the iron—that is to say, not only speak well but do well: otherwise they will have no faith in him.

The *Grandes Chroniques de St Denis*, according to the learned and enthusiastic Paulin Paris, are "perhaps the most beautiful, the most glorious historical monument which was ever raised in any language or among any nation, except that Book *par excellence*, the Holy Bible." At least, none reflects the spirit of its age more clearly than this. It was a book of very gradual growth, begotten of successive attempts to set before the laity, in their own tongue, the historical treasures hitherto accessible only in Latin, more especially among the archives of the royal monastery of St Denis. It owed its inception to the command of Philip the Bold—unless indeed this monarch was here only carrying out the instructions of his father St Louis. A monk of St Denis, named Primat, was commissioned with the work, which was presented to the king in 1274. This was the first version, which attained something like its final form in about 1310, except that successive generations constantly added fresh matter to bring it up to date. From 1350 onwards, these additions have no further connection with St Denis, but are purely secular. The text here used is that of Paulin Paris. 6 vols. 1836.

### 94. THE LAY-BROTHER AND THE DEVIL

(Vol. v, p. 157.)

THIS same year [1303], on the Saturday before Christmas, a Lay-Brother of Vaux-Cernay, of the Order of Cîteaux, whose name was Adam and who was warden of a Grange named Croches, hard by Chevreuse—this Adam, I say, awoke on the Saturday aforesaid, before daybreak, yet believing indeed that it was day, and set out on horseback with a servant on foot by his side. When therefore he had ridden forward a little space, he was aware of the Devil in visible shape under four or five forms, at some distance from the Grange aforesaid. For, as he rode along, saying his accustomed prayers in lieu of

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mattins and hours, he saw before him as it were a great tree in the road whereby he went, which said tree (as he thought) came hastily to meet him. Then his horse fell a-trembling and became half-crazy, so that he had much ado to guide him in the right way; and his servant, for his part, began to shudder, and the hairs of his head stood on end, and he was smitten with so great an horror that he could scarce stand on his feet or follow after his master. Then that same tree began to draw near unto the Lay-Brother aforesaid; and, when it was come nigh, it seemed dark and as it were covered with hoar-frost. Seeing this, he would fain have ridden by without touching it; but there issued therefrom a hideous stench of corruption. Then that Lay-Brother knew how this was the Devil, who would have done him harm; wherefore he set himself to cry upon the most Blessed Virgin Mary as devoutly as he might. So, after that he had recommended himself to our Lady, he began to ride very slowly, as one in sore dismay; then again he saw the Devil riding behind him on his right side; and the fiend seemed in human form, some two feet distant from the Brother aforesaid; yet no word did he say. Then the Brother took heart of grace and spake unto the Devil, saying: "Evil one, how art thou so bold as to assail me at this hour, while my Brethren sing their mattins and lauds, praying for me and for the other absent Brethren to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom this blessed day of Saturday is hallowed? Get thee hence, for thou hast no part or lot in me, who have vowed myself a servant of the Virgin." Then the Devil vanished away; nevertheless again for the third time he appeared in the form of a man of great stature, yet with a small and slender neck, standing there hard by. And then the Lay-Brother, being in grievous indignation to be so let and hindered of the Devil, took a little sword that he bore at his side, and began to smite manfully; yet were his strokes as vain as though he had smitten a cloth hanging in the air. Again, for the fourth time this Devil appeared to the said Brother Adam, in the garb of a black man, neither too great nor too small, even as it had been a black monk of St Benedict, with big and gleaming eyes like unto two copper cauldrons newly furbished or newly gilt. Then the said Brother, who was now sore wearied and

## THE LAY-BROTHER AND THE DEVIL

troubled with the vexation that this Devil made upon him, thought within himself to smite him in one of those eyes: whereunto he aimed his stroke to smite; but therewith his cowl fell over his eyes, and so he lost his stroke. Then again the Devil came in shape as a strange beast, having great ears like unto an ass. Then said the servant unto the Brother his master, "Sir, I have heard say that whosoever maketh a great circle, setting the sign of the cross in the midst and all round about, then the Devil is never so hardy as to come near. This Evil One vexeth you too sore; wherefore I counsel you to do as I say." Then the Brother took his little sword that he wore, (which sword had a blade sharp on either side) and made therewith a circle; in the midst whereof, and all around, he made the sign of the cross; and within he set his horse with his servant. Then he went to meet the Devil on foot, and began to assail him with many injurious and reviling words; and at length he spat in his face. Then the Devil changed his great ears into horns, and it seemed as though he were a horned ass: seeing which, the Lay-Brother would have cut off one of his horns; but his stroke leapt back as though he had smitten upon a marble-stone, for it did the Devil no harm. Then cried the servant to his master, "Sir, make upon yourself the sign of the cross." Then the said Brother signed himself: whereupon the Devil went suddenly thence, in shape of a great rolling barrel, towards a town called Molières that lay hard by; and that Brother saw him no more. Then he set out again on his way, for it was now clear day, and came as best he might to his Abbot, who was at one of the Granges with other Abbots of that Order; to which Grange the Abbot had bidden that Brother to dine with him. Thither he came, early in the morning, and told them of the adventure that had befallen him: thus therefore doth he testify who wrote this chronicle, and who was there present when that said Brother pledged his faith by oath before the Abbot of this Order, that whatsoever is here above written did indeed befall him, in the form and manner wherein he told it. And thereunto again beareth this present writer witness, that he knoweth that place well, and that he saw the very horse; which before then had been peaceful and debonnair, yet thenceforth he was ever impetuous and



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as it were half-crazy. All which things were confessed and testified upon oath by the said servant who was with the Brother when these things came to pass. And we must needs strip that Lay-Brother of the frock that he had worn, (so pestilent was the stench thereof,) and clothe him with one of the other Brethren's frocks.

### 95. WITCHCRAFT EXTRAORDINARY

(Vol. v, p. 269.)

MOREOVER, it befel in this year [1323] that an abbey of the Cistercian Order was robbed of a marvellous great sum of money. So they managed by the procuration of a man who dwelt at Château-Landon and had been provost there (for which cause he was still called Jean Prévost) that an agreement was made between him and an evil sorcerer, that they should contrive to discover the thieves and compel them to make restitution, in the fashion here following. First, the sorcerer let make a chest, with the help of the said Jean Prévost, wherein they clapped a black cat; and this they buried in a pit in the fields, right at a cross-way, and set three days' meat for the cat within that chest, to wit bread steeped and softened in chrism and consecrated oils and holy water;<sup>1</sup> and, in order that the cat thus interred might not die, there were two holes in the chest and two long pipes which rose above the earth thrown over that chest, by which pipes the air might enter therein and suffer the cat to breathe in and out. Now it befel that certain shepherds, leading their flocks afield, passed by this cross-way as had ever been their wont; and their dogs began to scent and get wind of the cat, so that within a brief while they had found the place where she lay. Then began they to scratch and dig with their claws, for all the world as it had been a mole, nor could any man tear them away from that spot. When the shepherds saw that their dogs would by no means depart thence, then they drew near and heard the cat mew, whereat

<sup>1</sup> In the face of such abuses of things consecrated, the church Councils of the Middle Ages constantly insisted that the Pyx, the Chrismatory, and the Font must be kept under lock and key in all churches. The neglect of these precautions is one of the points most frequently noted by official visitors.

## WITCHCRAFT EXTRAORDINARY

they were much amazed. And, seeing that the dogs still scratched without ceasing, one who was wiser than the rest sent word of this matter to the justice, who came forthwith to the place and found the cat and the chest, even as it had all been contrived; whereat he was much astonished, and many others who were come with him. And while this provost of Château-Landon pondered anxiously within himself how he might take or find the author of so horrible a witchcraft, (for he saw well that this had never been done but for some black art; but whereof or by whom he knew not) then it came to pass, as he thought within himself and looked at the chest which was newly-made, that he called all the carpenters of that town, and asked them who had made this chest. At which demand a carpenter came forward and said that he had made it at the instance of a man named Jean Prévost; "But so help me God," quoth he, "as I knew not to what purpose he had bidden me make it." Then within a brief space this Jean Prévost was taken upon suspicion, and put to the question of the rack: upon which he accused one Jean Persant as the principal author, contriver, and inventor of this cursed witchcraft; and afterwards he accused a monk of Cîteaux, an apostate, as the special disciple of this Jean Persant, and the Abbot of Sarquenciaux [Serquigny?] of the Order of Cîteaux, and certain Canons Regular,<sup>1</sup> who were all abettors of this wickedness. All of whom were taken and bound and brought before the Official of the Archbishop of Sens and the Inquisitor at Paris. When they were come before them, men enquired of them—and of these more especially of whom they knew by report that they were masters in this devilish art—wherefore they had done this thing. To which they answered that, if the cat had dwelt three days long at those four cross-roads, then they would have drawn him forth and flayed him; and from his hide they would have made three thongs, which they would have drawn out to their fullest extent and knotted together, so that they might make a circle within the compass

<sup>1</sup> Canons bound to the lifelong observance of a Rule; the best known are the Austin Canons and the Praemonstratensians. They were in fact practically monks, and are often so-called by medieval writers, though modern pedantry sometimes ignores this. Cf. Chaucer, *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*.

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whereof a man might be comprised and contained. Which when they had done, he who was in the midst of the circle would first nourish himself in devilish fashion with the meat wherewith this cat had been fed; without which these invocations would be null and of none effect. After which he would have called upon a devil named Berich, who would presently have come without delay, and would have answered all their questions and discovered the thefts, with all those that had been principal movers therein and all who had set their hands thereunto; and in answer to their questions he would have told them all the evil to be done. Upon the hearing of these confessions and downright devilries, Jean Prévost and Jean Persant, as authors and principals in this accursed witchcraft, were adjudged to be burned and punished with fire; but while the matter was drawn out and delayed, Jean Prévost chanced to die; whose bones and body were burned to ashes in detestation of so horrible a crime, and the other, to wit Jean Persant, was bound to the stake with the cat around his neck, and burned to ashes on the morrow of St Nicholas' day; after which the Abbot, and the apostate monk, and the other Canons Regular who had administered the chrism and other matters to this witchcraft, were first degraded and then, by all rules of law, condemned and put into prison for their lives.

Moreover there was in this same year a monk of Morigny, an abbey hard by Etampes, who by his curiosity and pride would fain have revived and renewed that condemned heresy and sorcery which is called in Latin *ars notoria*: but he had thought to give it another title and name. Now this science is such that it teacheth to make figures and impreses,<sup>1</sup> which must be different from each other and assigned each to a separate science; then they must be contemplated for a certain while spent in prayers and fasting; and thus, after this steady contemplation, that science was spread [into the student's mind] which, by that contemplation, he would fain have and acquire. But it was necessary to call upon certain unknown names, of which names men firmly believed that they were devils' names; wherefore that science deceived many, for none had ever practised it who had drawn any good fruit therefrom.

<sup>1</sup> Quasi-heraldic personal insignia, with motto; cf. *Richard II*, Act iii, Sc. 1.

## WITCHCRAFT EXTRAORDINARY

Nevertheless that monk revived this science, inasmuch as he feigned that the Blessed Virgin had oftentimes appeared to him as if to inspire him therewith; in whose honour he had let paint many images of her in his books, with many prayers and characters, very piteously and in fine colours, saying that the Virgin Mary had revealed all this unto him. Which images being applied to each science, and contemplated after the prayers duly said, then should a man receive the science that he coveted, and more withal; for, if a man would fain have riches, honours, or delights, then he had them [through this book]. Seeing therefore that the book promised such things, and that a man must needs make invocations and write his own name twice in the book, and let write the book for his own proper use alone, which was a matter of great cost, otherwise it would be worth nothing but if the book were written at his own cost and expense—therefore, I say, the said book was judged at Paris and justly condemned to be burned in the fire, as false and evil and contrary to Christian faith.

### 96. A PRECOCIOUS MIRACLE-WORKER

(Vol. v, p. 335.)

IN this same year [1329] in the diocese of Paris and the town of Pomponne, there was a boy of eight years old or thereabouts, who was said to heal sick folk by his word only; wherefore it came to pass that the sick flocked to him from divers parts. So it befel that some were healed and others not; moreover, he had no semblance of truth in his deeds and words; but, when men came to him with fevers or other such evils, then he would bid them eat meats that were contrary to their health. Wherefore prudent folk, seeing the manner of his conversation, paid no heed to it, for it seemed to them that this was but vanity and error. Then within a while it befel that the Bishop of Paris, seeing clearly how this was naught but error, sent for the father and mother of the said child and commanded them to suffer him no more to do such things; as also he forbade to all the folk of his diocese, under pain of excommunication, that none from thenceforth should resort unto this boy.

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### 97. THE BEATIFIC VISION

(Vol. v, p. 347, A.D. 1331.)

ON the first Sunday in Advent, Pope John XXII must needs preach publicly at Avignon, that the souls of such as die in grace see not yet the Divine essence, nor are in perfect bliss, until the resurrection of the body: wherefore many who heard those words and that opinion were sore scandalized. Yet we must believe that the Pope uttered those words according to his opinion, and not for certain truth; for that would have been heresy, and whosoever would affirm such a thing must be judged an unbeliever and an heretic. . . . Again, in this year [1333] when the sermon which Pope John had preached at Avignon, concerning the Beatific Vision, as aforesaid, seemed as it were to have been brought to nought, though some held it as true for favour of the Pope, and many more for fear [of him], then it came to pass that a Friar Preacher delivered a sermon asserting the true doctrine and gainsaying the Pope's opinion.<sup>1</sup> When the Pope knew this, he caused the said Friar to be put in prison. Then were two Friars sent from the Pope to Paris, one a Minor and the other a Preacher.<sup>2</sup> So the Minor came and preached plainly, in full congregation of the University, that the blessed souls see not God face to face, neither before nor after the Day of Judgment [*sic*]; whereupon a great murmur arose among the scholars who were there present. Then all the Masters of Theology at Paris judged this opinion to be false and full of heresy. When the Friar Preacher had heard how great a scandal had arisen among the Scholars at Paris, by reason of this Friar Minor's preaching and determining concerning the Beatific Vision, then he made ready to return to Avignon and speak with the Pope: yet before his departure he excused the Pope in a public sermon, saying how his Holiness had said all this not for certain truth, but according to his own belief. So this news came to the King's ears, and

<sup>1</sup> This was an Englishman, Thomas Wallis. The whole dispute was partly due to jealousies between the Dominican and Franciscan Orders; the Pope's view had been first mooted among the Franciscans.

<sup>2</sup> See note to vol. iv, no. 19.

## THE BEATIFIC VISION

the Friar Minor who had preached as aforesaid knew that the King was ill-pleased with him. Then the said Friar sought the King's presence and greatly desired to excuse himself; but it was the King's will that he should speak thereof in the presence of clerks. Therefore the King sent for ten Masters in Theology, amongst whom were four Friars Minor; of whom he asked, in the presence of this Friar aforesaid, what they thought of his doctrine which he had freshly published at Paris. Then these Masters made answer with one voice that it was false and evil and stuffed full of heresy; yet, for all that they said or showed to that Friar, he would not budge one whit from his sentence or his opinion. Then the King called straightway together to his castle of Vincennes all the Masters of Theology, all the prelates and all the abbots who could then be found at Paris, before whom the said Friar was summoned, and the King asked two questions of him in French: to wit, first, whether the souls of the saints see God's face forthwith, and secondly, whether this vision which they have at present of God's face will fail at the Day of Judgment, so that another vision must come. Then the Masters answered affirming the first to be true, and the second doubly [false]; for the vision will abide perpetually and will thus be the more perfect. To which the said Friar Minor consented, as it were by constraint. After which, the King required that letters should be drawn up concerning this matter. Then three pairs of letters were made, containing the same form, and sealed singly and separately by twenty-nine seals of the Masters who were there present. One of these the King sent to the Pope, requiring him to give a fuller approval to the sentence of the theologians concerning the Beatific Vision (as justice required), than to that of the jurists; and demanding that he should correct all such as maintained the contrary, for this would now be his duty. Moreover, this same year [1334], on the fourth of December and in the 19th year of his reign, Pope John gave up the ghost; and on his deathbed (as men report) he revoked this error which he had so long held concerning the Beatific Vision....

And in the year 1350, King Philip died... to whom men gave several surnames. Firstly he was called Philip the

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Fortunate. . . Secondly, Philip the Happy. . . Thirdly, Philip the Most Christian. . . Fourthly, Philip the True Catholic; for, as is written of him, he showed this both in word and in deed during his life. . . In deed he showed it when, during his reign (to wit, in the year 1331), Pope John had publicly preached at Avignon a grievous error concerning the Vision of God, which error had finally been preached in the city of Paris by two Masters of Theology.

This strange story of the dispute concerning the Beatific Vision will be found fully related in Rashdall's *Universities of Europe*, vol. i. pp. 529 ff., and Fleury, ann. 1331-4. The Pope relied upon the authority of Saints Augustine and Bernard; his reply to the King's letter "is as humble and apologetic as if he were a young student at Paris in danger of losing his Bachelor's degree for heresy. He apologizes for venturing to express an opinion upon a theological question when he was not a Doctor of Divinity, denies that the Franciscan General's utterances were inspired by him, and declares that he had in his sermon only explained the two views taken on the subject by different Fathers without positively committing himself to either side of the question. He refused, however, to condemn the opinion to which he personally leaned." In another letter, he expressed himself even more humbly: "Moreover, we add that if any person say that we have spoken against the aforesaid [truths], in any certain article or articles, then are we ready to hear that person with benignity, even though it were a child or a woman; and, if that person could prove us thus to have spoken, we offer ourselves as prepared to revoke those words, specially and expressly, in all due form" (H. Denifle, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, t. 2, p. 983). The genuineness of his deathbed Bull of Revocation has been seriously contested; it is admitted by all that he did not seal it, and that the earlier printed versions of it were garbled in the orthodox interest; but the mere fact of this garbling seems to imply the genuineness of the slightly less edifying form of the document as enrolled in the Papal Registers. How great a storm this event raised throughout Christendom may be seen from the large number of references collected in Baluze's *Vitae Paparum Avenionensium*; and from Villani's account (see next Extract). It is probable that the recollection of this, as much as anything else, dictated the frank admission of St James of the Mark, that "certain Popes" have in fact died in heresy (Baluze-Mansi, *Miscellanea*, vol. II, p. 599, written in about 1449).

## THE BEATIFIC VISION

Giovanni Villani, perhaps the most brilliant of all medieval historians next to Froissart, was a Florentine merchant of good family. He was a Prior of the Republic in 1316, played an important part in politics for many years, was ruined with many others by our Edward III's repudiation of his debts, and died of the Great Plague in 1348. He had been inspired to write his book by the sight of the pilgrims from all Europe who flocked to Rome for the first Jubilee of 1300, as Gibbon was inspired to write his *Decline and Fall* by the sight of the Capitol. An excellent volume of selections from Villani's Chronicle has been published in English by Mr P. H. Wicksteed and Miss Rose Selfe, and is indispensable to all Dante readers who cannot get at the original. This selection, ending in 1321, necessarily omits the following important extract, which is from the last chapter of the tenth book. After telling briefly the story of John XXII and the Beatific Vision the Chronicler goes on:

### 98. THE BEATIFIC VISION AGAIN

THIS opinion of his he proved and argued by many authorities and sayings of the saints; yet this question displeased the greater part of the Cardinals; nevertheless he commanded them, and all Masters and Prelates at his court, under pain of excommunication, that each should study this same question of the Vision of the Saints and should make his report to him thereof, according as each was of the same or the contrary opinion; protesting always that he had not determined on one side or the other, but that whatsoever he himself said and proposed was by way of disputation and exercise, to discover the truth. Yet with all his protestations it was certainly said and seen in fact that he thought and believed the said opinion; seeing that whensoever any Master or Prelate brought him any authority or saying of the saints favouring in any measure this opinion of his, then he received him gladly and rewarded him with some benefice. Then the Minister General of the Friars Minor, who was of the Pope's native city and a creature of his, preached this opinion at Paris: wherefore he was re-proved by all the Masters of Divinity at Paris and by the Dominican and Austin and Carmelite Friars; and King Philip of France sore rebuked this said minister, saying that he was an heretic and that, if he recognized not his error, he the king would burn him as an heretic, for he suffered no heresy in his realm; moreover he said that, even though the Pope himself



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had set forth this false opinion and would have maintained it, he would rebuke him for an heretic, saying as a faithful Christian layman that we should pray in vain to the saints, and hope vainly for salvation through their merits, if our Lady the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John and St Peter and St Paul and the other saints could not see the Deity or have perfect beatitude in the life eternal until the Judgment Day; and that, if this opinion were true, then all indulgences and pardons granted of old by Holy Church, or to be granted in future, were vain; which thing would be a great error and mischief to the Catholic faith. And it was agreed that, before the said Minister departed, he should preach the contrary of that which he had said, saying that whatsoever he had preached was only by way of question, and that his own belief was such as Holy Church was wont to believe and preach. Whereupon the King of France and King Robert [of Sicily] wrote to Pope John rebuking him courteously; for (as they said) notwithstanding that he propounded the aforesaid opinion only by way of question to seek out the truth, yet it became not a Pope to raise suspected questions against the Catholic faith, but to cut off and extirpate such as should raise them.

From an inventory of 1346, dealing with a single chapel, the *Chapelle du Marché*. When the list comes to the Virgin's flower and Gabriel's window, the modern editor notes: "This article and those like it, curious testimonies to the credulity of that epoch, have been marked off in this and the following inventories, on the occasion of the successive revisions to which they were subjected. In proportion to the more recent date of these revisions, we find marginal notes such as 'naught'; 'it is false'; 'worthless'; 'not to be found'; and at last these more than suspicious relics end by disappearing from the lists, leaving room for objects certainly more worthy of public veneration" (*Mém. Hist. de la Soc. des Ant. de la Morinie*, t. VI, pt. II, pp. xl ff.). The inventory is written on "a parchment roll several yards long"; the printed list is therefore far from exhaustive; but it is given here as it stands.

### 99. RELICS AT ST-OMER OF JESUS CHRIST AND HIS PASSION

A PIECE of the Lord's sign of the Cross, of His lance and His column. Of the manna which rained from heaven. Of

## RELICS AT ST-OMER

the stone whereon Christ's blood was spilt. Item, another little cross of silvered wood, containing pieces of the Lord's sepulchre and of St Margaret's veil. Of the Lord's cradle in a certain copper reliquary.

### GIVEN BY THE LORD DEAN [BOCHEUX].

In a certain crystal vessel, portions of the stone tables whereon God wrote the law for Moses with His finger. Item, in the same vessel, of the stone whereupon St James crossed the sea. Item, of the Lord's winding-sheet. Item, of Aaron's rod, of the altar whereupon St Peter sang mass, of St Boniface; and all this in a glass tube.

### OF ST MARY

Of the hairs of St Mary; item, of her robe; item, a shallow ivory box without any ornament save only a knob of copper, which box containeth some of the flower which the Blessed Virgin held before her Son, and of the window through which the Angel Gabriel entered when he saluted her. Item, of the Blessed Mary's oil from Sardinia. Item, in the same place, of the blessed Mary's sepulchre in [the vale of] Jehoshaphat, in a certain leaden case enclosed in a little ivory casket. Item, of the wax which was miraculously given to the play-actors, in a certain box with a glass cover.

### OF THE MARTYRS

Of the tunic of St Thomas of Canterbury, Archbishop and Martyr; of his hair shirt, of his dust, of his hairs, of his cowl, of his seat; again of his hairs. Again of his cowl and of the shavings of his crown. Again of his hairs, of the blanket that covered him, of his woollen shirt; again of the aforesaid St Thomas's hair-shirt, in a certain pouch contained in an ivory box. Item, of the blood of the same saint Thomas of Canterbury. Item, the staff of the aforesaid St Thomas the Martyr, Archbishop of Canterbury.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The *Gesta Abbatum S. Albani* is a chronicle of the Abbots of that great house compiled about 1350 by Thomas Walsingham, precentor of the Abbey and last of the great English chroniclers. The writer had access to the wide collection of documents in his Abbey; the *Gesta* extends from 793 to 1349, and Walsingham's own *Historia Anglicana* goes down to 1422. The edition of the *Gesta* here used is that published in the Rolls Series; it is brilliantly summarized by Froude in one of his Short Studies (Annals of an English Abbey).

### 100. HERMITS AND AN HERMITESS

(Vol. 1, p. 97.)

IN the days of this Abbot [Geoffrey, 1119-1146] flourished Roger . . . who was indeed one of our monks, but lived in an hermitage under the obedience of his Abbot. The hermitage wherein he dwelt may be seen by the wayside on the right hand as you go from St Albans to Dunstable, hard by the village which in these days is called Markyate; and our Roger had taken this spot by God's gift, having been led thither by the ministry and revelation of angels. . . . Never, as I think, did the cunning fiend send sharper temptations, or set more snares, for any man; but he, armed with the virtue of the Cross, conquered the first by God's grace, and avoided the second with the utmost discretion. . . . His devoted disciple was the Blessed Christina, a virgin born at Huntingdon, who for the love of chastity had left her ample possessions, and the home of a wealthy father. Yet he never consented to see the virgin's face, though for four years and more she was shut up in his cell. Now there was a building adjoining the oratory of the said Roger, with which it made an angle. This [angle], having a board before it, might so be concealed as to lead the outside beholder to suppose that no man was in this space, where there was only [ ].<sup>1</sup> In this prison Roger placed the joyful Christina, and set for a door a proper oaken plank which was so heavy that the anchoress could by no means move it either to or fro. Here the handmaiden of Christ sat crouching on the hard cold stone until Roger's

<sup>1</sup> This sentence, as Riley points out, is corrupt as it stands. It runs: "Is, antepositam habens unam tabulam, poterat ita celari, ut de foris aspicienti nullum interius haberi persuaderet, ubi tantum plus palmo semis inesset." But the general sense is sufficiently plain.

## HERMITS AND AN HERMITESS

death, that is for more than four years, unknown to the five hermits and to all who dwelt together with Roger. Oh, what discomforts she there endured from heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and daily fasting! The place was too narrow for her to wear the clothing needful for cold weather; while in the heat this close-fitting closet allowed her no refreshment. Her entrails were shrivelled and dried up by long fasting; and at times, for her burning thirst, clots of blood boiled up from her nostrils. Only at eventide could she go forth. . . . .; since she could not open the door for herself, however great might be her need, and Roger was customably slow; so that she must needs sit motionless in her place, and suffer torment, and hold her peace; for if she would have had Roger come to her, she must call to him or smite upon the door, and how could the hidden virgin do this, who dared not to utter even half a sigh? For she feared lest some other than Roger might be near, who at the mere sound of her breath might discover her hiding-place; and she would rather have died in her prison than make herself known at that time to any person outside.

To all these sufferings were added many and terrible diseases; but she bore all her tribulations meekly for the love of Christ. Yet Roger, the friend of God, would teach her now with words, now by example, and taught her almost incredible things of the secrets of heaven; for he showed himself such that his body alone seemed to remain on earth, while his whole soul conversed among heavenly things. And Christina profited so much by Roger's doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ, fairer than the sons of men, appeared as she sat in her cell, bearing a golden cross which He gave for her comfort, bidding her not to fear, and saying that all who would fain go to Jerusalem must needs bear this cross: which, (as He promised,) He would soon take away from her; after which He vanished from her eyes. This vision she related to Roger, who began to weep for joy, saying in the vulgar tongue, "*Rejoice with me, myn gode Sonendayes doghter*" (which is, being interpreted, *my good daughter of the Lord's Day*)<sup>1</sup> "for your tribulation will soon

<sup>1</sup> *Sunday's child* is still a German phrase for a lucky person; cf. the English rhyme:  
Sunday's child is full of grace,  
Monday's child is fair of face, etc., etc.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

be ended"; and it came to pass as the man of God said. Roger therefore, taking his hope from the multitude of graces which he had proved Christina to possess, thought to leave her as heir of his hermitage after his death. But she, having been warned in a vision and comforted by the Virgin Mary, knew that she would succeed to Roger's dwelling.

In those days Thurstan, Archbishop of York, a lover and cherisher of chaste pursuits and a faithful and devoted friend to Roger for his sanctity's sake, came to these parts; to whom Roger told of Christina's purpose, beseeching that he would deign to grant her his help. The Bishop therefore bade that he should send the virgin to him, wishing to speak with her privately concerning her purpose. Roger therefore, having sent for Godescal of Cadingdon and his wife, who were devoted friends of his, besought them to return on the morrow and bring Christina to Redbourn, whither the Archbishop intended to repair. When therefore they had gladly consented, then said the man of God: "Go home in peace, for I will pray for you, and it may be that ye will not repent of the travail which ye undergo for this handmaiden of God." They departed therefore, both content with the single horse which had borne them hither; and as they leaned forward<sup>1</sup> on their horse uphill through the winding woodland paths, saddle and riders rolled suddenly to the ground, for the girths had broken. It was already night: the horse had fled, and the infirm old folk had no attendant, nor could they have followed the beast even in daylight. What was to be done? At last they left the saddle, since it was too heavy to carry, and began to stumble forwards on foot through the dark, groping their way as best they could; and, in their trouble at this mishap, they complained "Where now is the promise of the man of God?" Scarce had they spoken, when lo! the horse stood by them, bridled and saddled and in his right mind; and by his side was the stump of a felled tree which seemed left there as a mounting-block for these servants of God: seeing which, they rendered hearty thanks to God and His servant Roger, mounted the beast, and came safely home. On the morrow, Godescal returned to Roger and

<sup>1</sup> The text has, *niteniesque jumento contra ascensum*, etc.; but perhaps we should read *nitente*, and translate, "as the horse was struggling up-hill, etc."

## HERMITS AND AN HERMITESS

brought Christina to the Archbishop, who was lodging at Redbourn. The Prelate, having bestowed salutary counsel upon the virgin, sent her back to Roger, with whom she remained in his hermitage until the day of his death, serving God in chastity and innocence, in humility and patience, according to his doctrine, until she had attained to the summit of all virtues. At last Roger, leaving this world at the call of the God whom he served, went the way of all flesh; his body was borne to St Albans Abbey, where it was buried with all due honour in an arched tomb built into the south wall of the church, hard by the choir of the brethren. After his death, when Christina had borne many and almost unendurable temptations, both from man and from the devil, and had always stoutly resisted them, then the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her in the shape of a babe, coming to the arms of His spouse and remaining all day long with her, plain both to touch and to sight; and thenceforth all temptations left her so utterly that she never feared any trial again. Then, by God's grace, she began to shine forth in the spirit of prophecy and to become a worker of miracles, so that the fame of her was spread abroad throughout the whole country round.

Here follows a record of commonplace miracles, which may be conveniently told in Mr Riley's summaries: "Alured, a deceased monk of St Albans, appears to Christina and discloses to her a certain intention of Abbot Geoffrey. The Abbot refuses to give credit to Christina, but is soon made to repent of his unbelief. His vision. Abbot Geoffrey affords aid and countenance to Christina, his spiritual adviser. Abbot Geoffrey founds a Nunnery at Markyate, for Christina and her fellow devotees. Miraculous appearance of Christina to Abbot Geoffrey, in a vision. Through the intercession of Christina, Abbot Geoffrey is twice excused from going to Rome. Her 'Life' preserved at Markyate. The Abbot consults her before repairing to court."

On such occasions the Abbot was wont to frequent Christina's company. She for her part revered the Abbot; and so great was the affection of mutual charity between them that, unless the whole multitude had well known how holy both were, it may be that evil suspicion would have arisen from so great a love. He who would learn more of the life and merits of this holy virgin, may find it at the convent of Markyate in the more fully-written Book of her Life.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

In the days of the same Abbot Geoffrey flourished the anchorite Sigar, who dwelt in the hermitage at Northawe [near St Albans]. . . of him it is reported that, having once been much disturbed in the tenour of his prayers by the singing of a nightingale, he bowed his knees to God and prayed Him to remove all birds of this sort, lest he might seem to rejoice rather in the warbling of birds than in the devotions whereunto he was bounden before God. And it befel according to the prayers of the holy man; so that not only while he yet lived, but even to the present time, birds of that kind avoid the place of his habitation, not only never presuming to sing, but never even appearing, for the distance of a whole mile round it. He, buried in our church, lieth in the same coffin as Roger the Hermit; whose tombs not the common people only, but even Kings of England were wont to visit, offering there precious brocades of Bagdad, wherewith they desired that the tombs might be covered.

### 101. A MIRACULOUS STATUE

(Vol. II, p. 335.)

AT this same time [1335-49] there arose a great strife and contention betwixt our Infirmarer, Brother John of Redbourn, alias Pyk, and William Puff, Vicar of St Peter's in the town, concerning a certain petition that was claimed to be unjust, and the taking of certain offerings and oblations at a cross lately erected in the churchyard of St Peter's. This cross had been most devoutly carved by the very hands of Master Roger de Stoke, clockmaker [*horologiarius*], who had set it up in the place where he had chosen to be buried. And many men say that he carved his cross on Fridays only, on which days he is said to have fasted on bread and water. When therefore the said cross had been set up, then stupendous miracles of God began to be wrought in that spot, which within a brief space brought pilgrims to worship at this cross from far and near. When therefore the pilgrims flocked thither and the oblations increased, then arose the aforesaid contention be-

## A MIRACULOUS STATUE

tween the said Infirmarer and Vicar. The cause was brought into the Consistory Court; where, after much dispute, the said Vicar was lawfully condemned for the unjust detention of these oblations, and was sentenced to pay the said Infirmarer, as Rector of his church, forty shillings (to which sum the oblations made at the said cross and taken by him were said to amount); moreover, he was condemned to pay the expenses incurred by the said Infirmarer in that cause.

An extremely close parallel to this may be found in the Chronicle of the Abbey of Meaux in Yorkshire (*Chronicon de Melsa*, R.S. vol. III, p. 35).

### 102. ANOTHER

THE aforesaid Abbot Hugh [1339-1349] caused a new crucifix to be made in the choir of the Lay-Brethren; whereon the sculptor carved no specially comely or notable lineament save upon Fridays only, on which days he himself fasted on bread and water. Moreover, he had a naked man before him to look at, that he might learn from his shapely form and carve the crucifix all the fairer. When therefore this crucifix was set up, the Almighty constantly wrought many solemn and manifest miracles through it; wherefore we thought that, if women might have access to the said crucifix, the common devotion would be increased and it would redound to the great profit of our monastery. Wherefore we petitioned the Abbot of our Mother House at Cîteaux, who granted us his special license to admit men and women of good repute to the aforesaid crucifix, provided only that the latter should not enter through our cloister or dormitory or other domestic buildings, excepting only our patroness, or the wife or daughter of our patron; yet even these might not spend the night within the abbey precincts nor enter before Prime nor stay beyond Compline; if this prohibition were broken, then the license should be null and void forthwith and for ever. Under pretext of which license women flock frequently to the aforesaid crucifix, yet only to our own damage, since their devotion is but cold, and they do but come to gaze at our church, and increase our expenses by claiming hospitality.



## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

### 103. THE LITTLE RED MAN

(Walsingham, *Hist. Ang.*, A.D. 1343.)

AT that time there befel a marvel in the northern parts, in the matter of a certain youth who had been of the household of the Baron of Graystock. He, riding one day through a rye-field, and marking how the rye rippled like a sea, suddenly saw a little red man raise his head from the corn; who, as the youth gazed upon him, seemed to grow bigger and bigger in stature. Then this apparition drew nigh and caught his bridle, and led him against his will into the rye, to a place where it seemed to him that a lady was seated, of wondrous beauty, with many maidens like unto herself. Then the lady bade them take him from his horse and tear his skin and flesh, and at last she commanded that he should be flayed alive. Then the said lady cut his head through the midst and (as he thought) took out his brain and closed up the empty skull; after which she bade them lift him upon his steed and dismissed him. With that he straightway lost his senses and began to rave and play the madman. When therefore he was come to the nearest town, then a certain maiden came and cared for him, who had been of the same lord's household and had loved him well; and, lest he should harm those who waited upon him, she let him be bound in chains. Thus she led him to many saints beyond the sea for the restoration of his health; until, seeing that all was vain, she brought him back to England. All this while that red man with the red hair ceased not to haunt him, but stood everywhere before his eyes, even as he had first appeared to him; and, even though men bound him with three or four chains, he was ever wont to loose them. At length, after six years of this misery, he was wholly cured at the shrine of St John at Beverley; where, falling into a quiet sleep, he seemed to see that comely lady cleave his head once more and replace the brain even as she had first taken it away. Therefore, finding himself restored to health, he wedded that same maiden who had led him from shrine to shrine; by whom he had fifteen sons. After her death he took Holy Orders, and was made a priest, and received the benefice of Thorpe Bassett. While therefore he

## THE LITTLE RED MAN

sang Mass with much devotion, and raised the Body of Christ in his hands, according to custom, for the people to see, then that same red man appeared to him and said: "Let Him whom thou hast in thy hands be thenceforward thy guardian, for He can keep thee better than I."

John de Grandisson was one of the most notable English bishops of the fourteenth century. He was born in 1292, the second son of an English baron who was descended from the lords of Granson near Neuchâtel, and therefore nearly connected with some of the greatest families on the continent. One of his cousins was the Sir Otho de Granson, "flower of them that make in France," to whom Chaucer did the honour of translating three of his *balades*. In later life, the bishop himself inherited the barony (1358). His second sister was the famous Countess of Salisbury of the *koni soit qui mal y pense* legend. At seventeen he was a Prebendary of York; he studied in Paris under the future Pope Benedict XII and became chaplain to Pope John XXII, who "provided" him in 1327 to the See of Exeter. Grandisson ruled this diocese with great vigour until his death in 1369.

## 104. A POPULAR MIRACLE

A.D. 1340. (*Register*, p. 941, Mandate from the Bishop to the Dean, the Subdean, and another, dated Feb. 12.)

THOUGH the news be brought by complacent public report, yet we have heard not without anxious and doubtful amazement how, on this Sexagesima Sunday [Feb. 11], all the bells of our Cathedral Church were rung at morning out of due course, before the ringing for the Mass of the Blessed Virgin, as though for a miracle there wrought by God's hand; which as we cannot easily prove either plainly or distinctly, so also we must not lightly believe, lest (which God forbid!) the people committed to our charge should perchance fall into idolatry or err from the path of Truth and the Catholic Faith; as we have often known it befall in several places, both in our own days and in the writings and acts of the Saints, through mad and false illusions and feigned superstitions of devils or of false Christians who are members of the devil, and sometimes for vain glory's or filthy lucre's sake. Wherefore we forbid you all and singular, in virtue of holy obedience and under pain of

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the Greater Excommunication against all rebellious persons, and of sentence of suspension to be laid upon the Chapter, and interdict upon the aforesaid Church,—and through you we prohibit all and singular the Ministers of our Cathedral, of whatever rank or condition they be—and we command you never in future, for any occasion or cause not first approved by ourselves, to ring, or cause or permit to be rung, the aforesaid bells, nor offer or make, nor let them offer or make, solemn or public prayers, or solemn adorations or worship of any sort soever in honour of any who are not yet canonized by the Holy See, in the said Church or elsewhere, after any fashion whatsoever, to the prejudice of orthodox faith; nor shall you or they proclaim or assert as a miracle any deed hitherto wrought in the aforesaid Church, or in future to be wrought, until we have been informed of the circumstances of this deed, and have thought fit to declare first that it is of God and not of any artifice; *item*, that it is against the course of nature; *item*, that it hath befallen by the merit of man and to the confirmation of the Faith. For since, before canonization, such solemn worship may not legally be paid even to proved miracles (which however are wrought both by good and evil persons, as may be more fully read and noted in the chapters *Teneamus* and *Prophetavit* [of Gratian]), every wise man must plainly see how much more blameworthy we must think it thus to worship where the miracles are not proved to be true. Yet we intend not hereby to prohibit you and others of our subjects to offer prayers in secret to any dead man whom ye and they believe to have been and to be a Saint. [The Bishop then cites the object of the alleged miracle, and his parents, to appear and give evidence at his Manor of Chudleigh by February 25th. He also probably saw to the matter himself; for already on February 13th he writes again:] Ye should not have forgotten how, even as the angel of Satan, (for so the Apostle teacheth us,) is wont to transform himself into an angel of light, and the crafty fox's cunning under a cloke of simplicity will baffle the hunter's wiles, so ye should not easily believe every spirit. In truth, after our late letter to you, since we wished to inform ourselves concerning the circumstances of a certain deed which the simple have reputed miraculous,

## POPULAR MIRACLES

wrought in our Cathedral of Exeter on Sexagesima last, a certain man who called himself John le Skynner, in whose person this was said to have come to pass, was set before us in the Chapel of our Manor of Chudleigh, in the presence of several Notaries Apostolic and no small press of other folk. Although at first he strove pertinaciously to defend his error, and to colour it with many shifts and oaths, wavering and vacillating hither and thither; yet at last, led by a better spirit, he confessed that he had feigned this deed for worldly lucre's sake and to relieve his poverty, admitting that for the last seven years he hath lacked the sight of one eye, and lacketh it still, and that he seeth with the other no better now than before; but that, deceived by the devil's wiles, he had cloked his assertions and oaths under colour of the blindness of the one eye and the sight of the other, which is even now as then. Wherefore, since we must proceed most cautiously where the danger is greatest, and on another occasion, (as Holy Scripture witnesseth,) the unbelief of Thomas was of more profit to Faith than the belief of the other disciples, therefore we bid you, guarding yourselves in future against such trifles, and especially against vile and unknown strangers, never to make or suffer to be made any solemnities in our Cathedral of Exeter on the strength of any assertions or oaths (not to say perjuries) of this kind, until the deed be first discussed and proved true with prudent care; lest ye be less circumspect than the Jews, who called the parents and acquaintances of the man born blind, that by many witnesses the truth might be established. Moreover, seeing that true miracles are often made vile by such feigned superstitions, to the peril of the purest truth of Orthodox Faith, we bid you expound the aforesaid to the people in our Cathedral on this next Quinquagesima Sunday, with such caution that no matter for scandal may flow therefrom, nor the indevotion of the faithful wax abundant, nor the Faith be imperilled, nor dangers arise to men's souls.

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### 105. ANOTHER

A.D. 1361. Letter of Bishop Grandisson to his Commissary in the Arch-deaconry of Cornwall, demanding an enquiry: *Register*, p. 1232.

It hath come to our ears, through a growing rumour, not without vehement wonder and amazement, that—albeit according to the Apostolic and Canonical Institutes no man is permitted, even though he work miracles, to venerate them publicly as actually wrought, without the authority of the Roman Church—yet certain impudent sons of this our Church of Exeter, not considering that we must not believe all spirits, (nay, rather seduced, perchance, by diabolical illusion and by a false superstition spread abroad by members of Satan,) commonly ascribe the title of Saint to Richard Buvyle formerly rector of the parish of Whitstone in our diocese, (who was slain, according to various opinions, either by those who envied him or by his own hand) venerating and worshipping him for a Saint, to the offence of the Catholic Faith and Canon Law. Wherefore all the inhabitants of the parts adjoining, and oftentimes foreigners also, flock in crowds as pilgrims to the spot where his body is said first to have been buried, and there make solemn oblations; and every week, on Saturdays, they hold there to a late hour, and through the whole night, watchings or wakes, wherefore victuals and other things are at such times brought thither for sale, and are sold as at a market; under colour and pretext whereof the sins of gluttony and drunkenness are there committed, and dishonest conventicles are held, with perpetration of things unlawful and abominable, which it beseecheth us not here to express. We therefore, (willing so far as in us lieth to restrain such wanton disorders and superstitious abuses, as we are bound to do in virtue of our own pastoral office, treading close in the footsteps of the Sacred Canons,) do now strictly enjoin and command you to publish this present mandate in all Chapters by you to be presently held, expounding it intelligibly in the vulgar tongue, and peremptorily prohibiting once, twice and thrice to all our subjects whatsoever, under pain of the Greater Excommunication—and cause to be likewise prohibited to their parishioners by all

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Curates within the boundaries of the said Archdeaconry—and through you also, in virtue of these present Letters, we prohibit—that none presume to hold there such watchings or wakes, nor to be present thereat, nor to worship or venerate the said defunct as a Saint, until perchance, his own merits demanding full enquiry, and having been declared in due course, he may be enrolled on the list of canonized Saints. And, seeing that miracles are oftentimes attributed not only to good but also to evil men, therefore we strictly enjoin and command you, as above, to enquire diligently and prudently concerning the persons who are said to have been healed at that spot, and whether they are known or unknown, and of what condition in life: concerning their infirmities and diseases also, what and what kind they were, and of how long duration, taking full and sworn evidence from men worthy of credit in those parts. And, if you find that aught was there done which could be done by no fiction, art, device, or natural means, then cite peremptorily, or cause to be cited, that person or those persons who have received this grace of healing, and witnesses through whom the truth may be more clearly proved in this matter, to appear before us, at a certain competent place and time to be fixed by yourself, that they may depose to the truth which they know, and act further as required by Canon Law.

[The Archdeacon convened a jury in the parish church of Wyke St Mary, consisting of three neighbouring vicars, three chaplains (*i.e. curates*), and six laymen, whose evidence he reports as follows.]

They say that the daughter of a certain William Ludlou of the Parish of Launcells, who was born blind and suffered from such blindness four weeks or more, was brought to the place of the first burial of the aforesaid R. Buvyle and there received her sight, and henceforth could see, as they say. Moreover a certain Cornishman whose name and surname they know not, lame and bent, who went on his knees with two low crooks in his hands, was cured of his infirmity at the said spot about the Feast of the Holy Trinity 1359, and, leaving the said crooks there as an offering, departed whole and upright. Moreover a certain smith of Winkleigh, whose name they know

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not, who had his left hand so contracted and so long closed that the fingers of the said hand made as it were holes therein, was cured of this said infirmity, as they say, in the Church of Whitstone, after that the corpse of the said defunct was moved thither from its first place of sepulture. Moreover, a certain Joan Gyffard, of the parish of Hartland, who for two years before the death of the aforesaid Richard Buvyle lay in a palsy, and wasso grievously sick that she could neither rise from her bed nor raise food to her own mouth, was taken to the first place of sepulture of the said Richard Buvyle on a certain pallet of her



A CRIPPLE

From a fourteenth-century MS. in T. Wright's  
*Homes of Other Days*, p. 338.

own, and on the Saturday next following the Feast of the Holy Trinity last past two years ago, about midnight following the aforesaid day, was there healed of her aforesaid infirmity. Moreover a certain Roger Hennygan of Bodmin, blind in and of both eyes, on the Saturday next following the Feast of St John Baptist last past, in the aforesaid Church of Whitstone, after the removal thither of the body of the said defunct, was healed of the blindness of his left eye, and saw, and henceforth was able to see therewith; how long he had suffered blindness in both eyes they know not, as they say. Moreover a certain Thomasia, wife of Arnulph Coke of the Parish of Great Toriton, lame of her right leg, and so crooked therein that she could not set down her right foot lower than to her left knee, on the Sunday next after the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary last past, in the aforesaid Church of Whitstone wherein the body of the said defunct lay buried, received there the grace of healing for the said infirmity. Moreover a certain woman of the parish of Northam, whose name they know not, furious and crazy of her mind, was brought tied and bound to the said Church of Whitstone after the removal hither of the body of the said defunct; and this

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same woman, though so vexed with madness that she tore the wax tapers in the said Church with her teeth, and would have torn down and broken the images therein, about the Feast of the Nativity of St John Baptist last past one year ago, was cured of this furious sickness; since when certain of the aforesaid inquisitors have seen the said woman, in her right mind, coming to the said Church for the sake of pilgrimage and devotion, and there saying her prayers and supplications, as they say. Moreover a certain woman of the parish of Clovelly, whose name they know not, lame and grievously sick, was brought in a certain horse-litter to the said Church of Whitstone after the burial there of the aforesaid defunct; and this same woman, about the Feast of St Peter called *Ad Vincula* last past one year ago, was there cured of the said infirmity. Moreover a certain man of Woodford in the parish of Plympton, whose name they know not, but who had for two years lost the sight of his right eye through a blemish called *cirrhus*, came to worship and pray at the aforesaid Church of Whitstone after the burial there of the said body; and there, about the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary last past, he recovered the sight of the said eye. Moreover a certain Lavinia Stolloke, of the parish of Whitstone, having a great and horrible hump [*gibbum*] on her left foot, and being lame for a month, in Easter week last past two years ago, was brought on horseback to the first place of sepulture of the said defunct, to pray for his soul, having heard before that the body of the said defunct should be removed from thence; and there, after that she had said a Paternoster with an Ave Maria for the soul of the said defunct, she received the grace of healing for the aforesaid infirmity, and returned thence whole to her own home.

[Here the records end: we may therefore presume that the Bishop did not think the evidence sufficient to justify any petition for the late Rector's canonization.]



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### 106. A BISHOP IN *PARTIBUS*

Bishops in *partibus infidelium* first became common towards the close of the thirteenth century, when the final failure of the Crusades and expulsion of the Christian clergy threw numbers of unemployed eastern bishops upon the European dioceses. These merely titular bishoprics were, however, regularly filled up; some of the Bishops in *partibus* were useful as Papal commissioners, while others were employed as suffragans by overworked or absentee prelates. They were nearly always friars, with too little dignity or responsibility to command very much respect or popularity. In a well-known passage of *Piers Plowman* the author complains of

prelates that [the Pope] maketh,  
That bear bishops' names, of Bethlehem and Babylon...  
That hop about England to hallow men's altars,  
And creep amongst curates and confessen against the law.<sup>1</sup>

The following articles of accusation by Grandisson against such an intrusive Friar-Bishop are entered in his Register under the year 1347, p. 1028. They should be compared with the Extract given in my second volume from the Limburg Chronicle, *an.* 1386.

*IMPRIMIS*, ye must know how formerly the Austin Friars, of their own wayward will, took a certain site in the town of Dartmouth, (which is within the parish of Tunstall, united and appropriated to the Abbot and Monks of the Praemonstratensian house of Torre in the said diocese,) and there began to erect a chapel in spite of various inhibitions of the said Lord Bishop of Exeter, . . . [whereupon followed long legal proceedings, ending in a definite judgment from Rome against the Friars]. . . . After which, on the 14th day of March in the year 1344, there came to the aforesaid town of Dartmouth the said Brother Hugh, secretly and almost suddenly, in habit as a layman with long sword and buckler, clad in a close short coat with buttons, giving himself out at his first coming as a servant and fiscal officer of the Lord King, sent to arrest ships in that port; after which, entering the said Friary, he there put off the aforesaid coat and clad himself in the dress of an Austin Friar, and forthwith took a pastoral staff in his hand and set a mitre on his head, and summoned the parishioners

<sup>1</sup> B. xv, 537: it is noteworthy that the parallel passage in C-Text alters the titles of the bishops: "that bear name of Naphtali, of Niniveh and *Damascus*." (C. xviii, 261.)

## A BISHOP IN PARTIBUS

of the said church of Tunstall in a great multitude; whereupon he publicly asserted and claimed that he was Bishop of Damascus, sent to the aforesaid Friary by our Lord Pope and all the Lord Cardinals, to consecrate the Chapel of his Brethren there, and that the said Friars had gained all their will and won the victory at the Roman Court against the said Abbot and Monks; and he sprinkled [holy] water and went round the aforesaid Chapel. After which, he granted to the said parishioners and others Indulgences even of a hundred days,<sup>1</sup> confirmed babes and children and anointed them on the forehead, heard confessions of the said parishioners, and absolved certain men excommunicated under the Canon *Si quis suadente Diabolo*<sup>2</sup> on account of violent assault committed even in the said town, as he said, and granted letters to those whom he had thus absolved. After which he repaired to many taverns in the said town and drank therein, showing to men and women his hand with a certain ring which he wore, and saying that the Lord Pope had given him this with his own hands. And, when men asked why and how he could do such things in a diocese not his own, pleading how the Lord Bishop of Exeter had to dedicate churches in his diocese, and confirm children, and absolve, and perform other such offices, and not another man unbidden by him, then this same [Brother Hugh] answered and said that he cared naught for the said Lord Bishop, and wrought and said other abusive things, to the scandal and ignominy of our Lord Pope, and the Lord Cardinals of the Apostolic See, and the See of Exeter.

Grandisson, therefore, excommunicated the intrusive Bishop—or rather Archbishop—who finally submitted, excusing himself in writing

<sup>1</sup> The Bishop himself seldom gave so much: e.g. to all who would contribute to the Leper-house at Exeter, or worship at Clotworthy chapel, 20 days (*Reg.* pp. 376, 378), to those who performed certain ceremonies in Exeter Cathedral, 30 days (p. 389), to those who attended the sermons of a preacher from Yorkshire, 40 days (p. 390). The culprit, in his answer, pleads that he gave Indulgences of only 40 days.

<sup>2</sup> "If any, at the Devil's instigation, incur such a guilt of sacrilege as to lay violent hands on a cleric or a monk, let him be excommunicated, nor let any bishop presume to absolve him, except on his deathbed, until he present himself before the Pope and receive his commands" (Gratian, *Decretum*, p. II, c. xvii, q. iv, c. 29, from a decree of Pope Innocent II). The Pope, however, commonly deputed such powers of absolution to the Diocesan bishop: see Extract no. 72.

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to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The following is the gist of his apology, apart from some rather lame denials of special points.

As for the first article. . . of coming by stealth to Dartmouth, this the aforesaid Lord Archbishop confesseth, as also that he came in lay dress, wearing a sword, (but no buckler as is asserted,) and clad in a close buttoned short coat. Yet he saith that from the beginning of his journey at Cambridge as far as Exeter he went in the habit of his Order, with two brother-friars in his company: in which city (as he saith) he was informed by certain friends of his Order that he must needs pass through a certain town in the domain of the Abbot of Torre; and, because it was noised abroad that a Bishop was to come and consecrate the cemetery of the Austin Friars' Chapel at Dartmouth, such ambushes were prepared, (as the said friends reported,) that, if he had been known to come for that cause, he would have incurred peril of his own body; for which cause, and no other, he took and put on a lay dress for that journey. . . . Again, as to the article that he heard confessions of the aforesaid parishioners and absolved certain excommunicate under the Canon *Si quis suadente Diabolo*. . . he denieth it; but he saith that a certain shipman, calling himself a native of St Albans, whose name (as he saith) he knoweth not, ran upon him as he wore his pontifical dress, and smote him on the arm with a certain bow which he carried, thinking (as he said) that he was the Abbot of Torre, come to expel the Friars from their said Friary: and the said Archbishop affirmeth that this same shipman, with many others his aiders and abettors, threatened him savagely [*intulit ei minas feroces*] that, unless he would absolve him, he should never leave that town alive; whereupon he, moved with fear (which might fall even upon a man of constant spirit), absolved him and drew up Letters for him regarding this absolution aforesaid.<sup>1</sup> Yet he first said that to himself pertained only forgiveness of the injury, and that absolution pertained to the Diocesan Bishop. As to the article that he went to taverns in the said town and drank there, he saith that at the invitation of William Smale, then Mayor of

<sup>1</sup> It will be noted that this happened when Chaucer was not yet in his teens; if only it had been a little later, we might have been tempted to find in one of these aiders and abettors the immortal Dartmouth Shipman of the Canterbury Tales.

## A BISHOP IN PARTIBUS

the town of Dartmouth, and William Bakon, burgess of the said town, he entered into their houses and drank with them in their hall and principal chambers, and not elsewhere in the said town. With regard to his showing to men and women his ring and saying that the Lord Pope gave it to him with his own hands, he denieth it. . . . As to the consecration of the said cemetery, he saith that the Brethren of his Order told him how they had a Papal Privilege wherein it was indulged to them that, if the Diocesans should refuse to consecrate their cemeteries, churches, or oratories, or should show themselves difficult in that matter, then the said Brethren might cause this to be done by any Catholic bishop willing to do them the service: yet he saith that he saw no such Privilege. And, being asked whether he had never been cited by the Bishop of Exeter to answer to him concerning the aforesaid complaints to be made in virtue of his office [as Diocesan], he said that, on his way back from Dartmouth to Exeter, as he was at dinner, a servant came to him bearing a wand and asserting himself to be the apparitor of the Bishop of Exeter, and said to the Lord Archbishop, "My Lord, I summon you to appear before my Lord Bishop of Exeter (at a certain place and hour then expounded by the said servant) and to answer to the aforesaid complaints to be made against you in virtue of his office." Yet (as this Archbishop said) this citation seemed to him unlawful, because the said servant showed not his commission, nor expounded the articles whereupon he cited him; wherefore (as he said) he appeared not on the day assigned him to appear before the Lord Bishop of Exeter. . . .

The Bishop of Exeter then removed his excommunication, and the Archbishop of Damascus promised to appear personally at Lambeth and accept the Primate's decision on the matter.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Eustache Deschamps, Chaucer's French contemporary and panegyrist, is a voluminous poet who, without much inspiration, gives many vivid pictures of contemporary life. This *balade* is all the more significant because Deschamps represents ordinary orthodox lay opinion, and his murmured complaint was repeated a generation later by the great Gerson. The edition quoted is that of the *Société des Anciens Textes Français*.

### 107. GRAVEN IMAGES

(Vol. VIII, p. 201.) *Balade*.

*That we should set up no graven images in the churches, sawe only  
the Crucifix and the Virgin, for fear of idolatry.*

TAKE no gods of silver or gold, of stocks or stones or brass, which make men fall into idolatry; for it is man's handiwork wherein the heathen vainly believed, adoring false idols from whose mouths the devils gave them doubtful answers by parables; warned by their false beliefs, we will have no such images.

For the work is pleasing to the eye; their paintings (of which I complain), and the beauty of glittering gold, make many wavering folk believe that these are gods for certain; and fond thoughts are stirred by such images which stand around like dancers in the minsters,<sup>1</sup> where we set up too many of them; which indeed is very ill done, for, to speak briefly, we will have no such images.

The Cross, the representation of Jesus Christ, with that of the Virgin alone, sufficeth fully in church for the sanest folk, without this leaven of wickedness, without believing in so many puppets and grinning figures and niches, wherewith we too often commit idolatry against God's commandments; we will have no such images.

1

"Telz ymages qui font caroles  
Es moustiers ou trop en mettons."

*Carole* was often used of any circlet, or series of objects arranged in a ring; also it was the ordinary word for a round dance, accompanied (as nearly all medieval dances were) with song. The *Metrical Life* of St Hugh of Lincoln applies the same simile to the slender marble shafts with which the plain stone core of each column is ringed; the thirteenth-century architect Villard de Honnecourt uses it of the colonnade round a semi-circular apse; see his *Album*, ed. Lassus, p. 121, and J. Quicherat, *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. II, p. 272.

## GRAVEN IMAGES

### L'ENVOY

Prince, let us believe in one God only, and we shall have Him perfectly in the fields, everywhere, for that is reason; not in false gods of iron or adamant, stones which have no understanding; we will have no such images.

Geoffrey de la Tour-Landry fought in the Hundred Years' War at least as early as 1346 and as late as 1383. He wrote in 1371, for the instruction of his daughters, a book which became the most popular educational treatise of the Middle Ages. This "Book of the Knight of the Tower" was translated into German, and at least twice into English; it had passed through seven editions in the three languages before 1550. After Caxton's edition of 1483 there was none in English until it was reprinted in 1868 by T. Wright for the Early English Text Society, from a MS. of Henry VI's reign. It is from this edition that the following extract is taken.

### 108. GOSSIP IN CHURCH

(P. 41.)

YET will I tell you what befel at the mass of the holy man, St Martin of Tours, and as he said mass there help him St Brice, the which was his clerk and godson, that after St Martin was Archbishop of Tours, the which Brice took up a great laughing, and St Martin perceived it. And when the mass was done, St Martin asked him why he laughed, and he answered, that he saw the fiend write all the laughings that were between the women at the mass, and it happed that the parchment that he wrote in was short, and he plucked hard to have made it longer with his teeth, and it scaped out of his mouth, and his head had a great stroke against the wall, "and that made me to laugh." And when St Martin heard him, he knew that St Brice was an holy man. And he preached this to the women, and how it was a great peril and sin to speak and counsel of worldly matters at the mass or at God's service, and that it were better not to be there than to have such language and clattering. And yet some clerks sustain that none should not speak no manner thing while they be at mass, and especial at the gospel, nor at the "per omnia";<sup>1</sup> and therefore, daughters,

<sup>1</sup> Part of the Canon of the mass, designated by its first words.

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ST MARTIN'S MASS

From the famous tapestry at Montpezat, dating from about 1500 (Didron, *Annales Archéologiques*, vol. III, p. 95; cf. vol. II, p. 268). Note the statue of Moses with his horns under the niche on the altar. The same scene is represented on the carved screen of St Fiacre in Brittany.

here is an example how ye shall hold you humble and devout  
in the church, and for no thing have no jangling with nobody  
while ye are at the mass, nor while ye serve God.

## CHAUCER'S ARCHDEACON

The British Museum Royal MS. 6, E. VI, is a great theological dictionary in two volumes, compiled at the beginning of the fourteenth century from many earlier authors of repute. The book illustrates in many passages the ideas of Dante's age: e.g. on fol. 37 b the friars are spoken of in much the same terms as *Par.* XII, 112 ff., and the author refers to the damnation of Pope Anastasius for heresy (fol. 360 b, cf. *Inf.* XI, 8).

### 109. CHAUCER'S ARCHDEACON

(fol. 132 b, rubric *Archidiaconus.*)

AND, seeing that God Almighty, Whose are all things, demandeth not money for sin, yet certain judges, who altogether ignore this, or who scorn it presumptuously and of set purpose, remit for a small money-fine the spiritual or corporal penalties fixed by the Canons for sin, and (which is yet worse) in violation of repeated Canons and Constitutions, take payments of money from the delinquents for mortal and notorious sins, and such as breed scandal . . . (135 b). And, albeit they are at fault in many things, yet these are their besetting sins. First, they impose unlawful taxes upon the priests of their archdeaconries. . . . Secondly, that they must needs take the white cow or some other worldly chattel for the ceremony of institution. . . . Thirdly, that they suffer the clergy to live in their sins, for the sake of the moneys which they extort from them. . . . Eighthly, that, to the detriment of their own good name, they must needs have light women in their houses.

From a MS. volume of English Sermons, written at the latter end of the fourteenth century, sometime in the library of St Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, now Brit. Mus. MS. Add. 24,202 (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, II, 45). The preacher is arguing against those who defend miracle-plays.

### 110. A SERMON AGAINST MIRACLE-PLAYS

BUT here-against they sayen (1) that they playen these miracles in the worship of God, and so diden not these Jews that bobbeden Christ. (2) Also oftentimes by such miracle-playing be men converted to good living, as men and women seeing in miracle-playing that the devil by their array (by the



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which they mouen each other to lechery and to pride) maketh them his servants to bring themselves and many others to Hell, and to haue far more villainy hereafter by their proud array there than they haue worship here. And seeing furthermore that all this worldly being here is but vanity for a while, as is miracle-playing, wherethrough they leaue their pride and taken to them afterwards a meek conversation of Christ and of His saints; and so miracle-playing turneth men to the belief and not perverteth. (3) Also oftentimes by such miracle-playing men and women seeing the passion of Christ and of His saints be moued to compassion and devotion, weeping bitter tears. Then they be not scorning of God but worshipping. (4) Also profitable to men and to the worship of God it is to fulfillen and seeken all the means by the which men may see sin and drawen them to virtues. And sith as there be men that only by earnestful doing willen be converted to God, so there be other men that willen be converted to God but by games and play; and nowadays men be not converted by the earnest doing of God nor by men nor of men; then now it is timely and skilful to assayen to conuert the people by plays and games, as by miracle-playing and other manner mirths. (5) Also some recreation men must haue, and better it is or less evil that they haue their recreation by playing of miracles than by playing of other japes.<sup>1</sup> (6) Also since it is lawful to haue the miracles of God painted, why is not as well lawful to haue the miracles of God played, since men may better readen the will of God and His marvellous works in the playing of them than in the painting? and better they be holden in men's minds and often rehearsed by the playing of them than by the painting, for this is a dead book, the other a quick.

(1) To the first reason we answeren saying that such miracle-playing is not to the worship of God. For they be done more to be seen of the world and to plesen to the world than to be seen of God or to plesen to Him, as Christ never ensampled them, but only heathen men that evermore dishonoure God, saying that to the worship of God that is to the most villainy of Him; therefore as the wickedness of the misbelief of heathen men lieth to themselves when they sayen

<sup>1</sup> Jests.

## A SERMON AGAINST MIRACLE-PLAYS

that the worship of ther maumetry<sup>1</sup> is to the worship of God, so men's lechery nowadays to have their own lusts lieth to themselves, when they say that such miracle-playing is to the worship of God. . . . . (2) And as anents the second reason we say that, right as a virtuous deed is otherwise occasion of evil, as was the passion of Christ to the Jews, but not occasion given but taken of them, so evil deeds be occasion of good deeds otherwhile, as was the sin of Adam occasion of the coming of Christ, but not occasion given of the sin but occasion taken of the great mercy of God; the same wise miracle-playing, albeit that it be sin, is otherwhile occasion of converting of men, but as it is sin it is far more occasion of perverting of men, not only of one singular person but a whole country, as it maketh all the people to be occupied in vain, against this behest of the Psalter-book that saith to all men, (and especially to priests that each day readen it in their service,) "Turn away mine eyen that they see not vanities," and again, "Lord, Thou hatest all waiting [on] vanities." How, then, may a priest playen in interludes or given himself to the sight of them, sithen it is forbidden him so expressly by the aforesaid behest of God? especially, sithen he curseth each day in his service all those that bowen away from the behests of God: but, alas! more harm is, priests nowadays must shrewen<sup>2</sup> themselves, and all day, as many that all day crien "What, shrew!" shrewing themselves. Therefore, miracle-playing, sithen it is against the behests of God that biddeth that thou shalt not take God's name in idle, it is against our belief, and so it may not give occasion of turning men to the belief but of perverting, and therefore many men weenen that there is no Hell of everlasting pains, but that God doth but threaten us and not do it indeed, as be playing of miracles in sign and not in deed.<sup>3</sup> Therefore

<sup>1</sup> Idolatry; our medieval ancestors imagined Mohammedans to be idolaters.

<sup>2</sup> Curse.

<sup>3</sup> Such freethought was common already in the thirteenth century, as Berthold von Regensburg testifies (ed. Pfeiffer, vol. 1, p. 386; cf. vol. 11, p. 227). "Some men say 'the man who is used to hell is more at his ease there than elsewhere.' That is a great lie: for no man can ever be used to hell. Master Cain was the first to go down thither; yet his torments are as sore, and the fire is as hot for him at this hour as on the first day: and if a man is to grow used to hell at all, then Cain might well be so used after these seven thousand five hundred years. Others again say

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

such miracle-playing not only perverteth our belief but our very hope in God, by the which saints hoped that the more they abstained them from such plays the more meed they then should have of God; and therefore the holy Sara, the daughter of Raguel,<sup>1</sup> hoping her meed of God, saith: "Lord, thou wottest that never I coveted man, and clean have I kept myself from all lusts: never with plays y-mingled me myself." And by this true confession to God, as she hoped, so had she her prayers heard and great meed of God; and, sithen a young woman of the Old Testament, for keeping the bodily virtue of chastity and for to worthily take the Sacrament of Matrimony when her time should come, abstained her from all manner idle playing and from all company of idle players; much more a priest of the New Testament, (that is passed the time of childhood, and not only should keep chastity but all other virtues, not only ministering the sacrament of matrimony but all other sacraments, and especially sithen him oweth to minister to all the people the precious Body of Christ) ought to abstain him from all idle playing both of miracles and else.

.....(3) By this we answeren to the third reason, saying that such miracle-playing giveth none occasion of very weeping and needful; but the weeping that falleth to men and women by the sight of such miracle-playing, as they be not principally for their own sins nor of their good faith within sorry, but more of their sight without, [therefore their] sorrow is not allowable before God but more reprovablen. For, sithen Christ Himself reproveth the women that wepten upon Him in His passion, much more they be reprovablen that weepen for the play of Christ's passion, leaving to weepen for the sins of themselves and their children, as Christ bade the women that wepten on Him. (4) And by this we answeren to the fourth reason, saying that no man may be converted to God but only by the earnestful doing of God and by none vain playing. For

(I have heard it even from learned folk) that our Lord maketh for some men a house and a mansion in hell, that no torment may come nigh them. That again is a lie and a heresy."

<sup>1</sup> Tobias iii, 16, 17, which runs thus in the Douay version, "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust. Never have I joined myself with them that play: neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness."

## A SERMON AGAINST MIRACLE-PLAYS

that which the word of God worketh not, nor His sacraments, how should playing worken, that is of no virtue but full of default? Therefore, right as the weeping that men weepen oft in such play commonly is false,—witnessing that they loven more the liking of their body and all prosperity of the world than liking in God and prosperity of virtue in the soul; and therefore, having more compassion of pain than of sin, they falsely weepen for lacking of bodily prosperity more than for lacking of ghostly, as doen damned men in hell;—right so oftentimes the converting that men seemen to be converted by such playing is but feigned holiness, worse than is other sin beforehand. For if he were verily converted he should haten to see all such vanity, as bidden the behests of God, albeit that of such play he take occasion by the grace of God to flee sin and to follow virtue. And, if men sayen here that if this playing of miracles were sin, would God converten men by the occasion of such playing? hereto we sayen that God doeth so for to commend His mercy to us; that we thinken entirely how good God is to us that, while we be thinking against Him, doing idleness and withstaying Him, He thinketh upon us good and sendeth us His grace to flee all such vanity.... Therefore the priests that sayen themselves holy, and busien them about such plays, be very hypocrites and liars. (5) And hereby we answer to the fifth reason, saying that very recreation is not unlawful occupying in false works, but more ardently working greater works; and therefore such miracle-playing nor the sight of them is no very recreation but false and worldly, as proven the deeds of the fautours<sup>1</sup> of such plays that yet never tasten very sweetness in God, travailling so much therein that their body would not sufficen to bearen such a travail of the spirit; but as men goeth from virtue to virtue, so they go from lust unto lust, that they more steadfastly dwellen in them; and therefore as this feigned recreation of playing of miracles is false conceit, so is it double shrewdness, worse than though they playen pure vanities. For now the people giveth credence to many mingled leasings,<sup>2</sup> for [the sake of] other mingled truths, and maken weenen that to be good which is full evil; and so oftentimes less evil it were to

<sup>1</sup> Favourers, abettors.

<sup>2</sup> Lyings.

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playen ribaldry than to playen such miracles. And if men axen what recreation men shoulde have on the holiday after their holy contemplation in the church, we sayen to them two things; one, that if he had throughly occupied himself in contemplation before, neither would he ask that question nor have will to see vanity; another, we sayen that his recreation should be in the works of mercy to his neighbour, and in delighting him in all good communication with his neighbour as before he delighted him in God, and in all other needful works that reason and kind axen. (6) And to the last reason we sayen that painting, if it be very, without mingling of leasings, and not too curious to much feeding men's wits, and not occasion of maumetry to the people, they [the paintings] be but as naked letters to a clerk to readen the truth. But so be not miracles-playing, that be made more to delighten men bodily than to be books to lewd<sup>1</sup> men. And therefore, if they be quick books, they be quick books to shrewdness more than to goodness. Good men therefore, seeing their time too short to occupyen them in good earnest works, and seeing the day of the reckoning nighen fast, and unknowing when they shall go hence, fleeen all such idleness, hasting that they weren with their spouse Christ in the bliss of Heaven.

John Gower, Chaucer's friend, was probably a London merchant and a country squire: the reader should consult G. C. Macaulay's admirable essay on him in the *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.* vol. II, chap. vi. His poems are frankly satirical, but gain much force as evidence from his frequent protest that he simply voices what the public is saying around him. The following Extract is from his *Mirour de l'Omme*, ed. Macaulay, ll. 25,213 ff. and 26,077 ff.

### III. AH, CONSTANTINE!

*THE author will now speak partly of the estate of such as govern this world, and firstly of the Court of Rome.*

To speak of these Prelates who are as it were ambassadors of God, with the clergy appertaining to them, these are become advocates of Sin to plead in law against the Soul; moreover, to

<sup>1</sup> Unlearned, common.

## THE COURT OF ROME

speaking of Kings, they so rob their people daily that all men complain, both high and low. And if we go on to speak of men of law and merchants, I see peril in all estates.

I firmly believe that the authority of him who is Head of Holy Church under God, if he govern himself by right, is set above all others; but nowadays that ordinance is changed; for that which was once Humility is now Pride, and we see how the largess of old times is now turned to covetise. Whether Chastity dwell there nowadays or no, I know not whether it be for me to say; wherefore I hold my peace on that matter. Whatsoever I think to write here is not of mine own self, for it is the murmur, the complaint, the voice and the cry of all Christian folk. What they all say I unsay not:—that the Court of Rome is ruled in our days by simony of gold and silver, so that the poor man's cause shall never be heard for all his clamour: he who bringeth no gifts thither shall never meet with justice or charitable mercy. . . . By papal law it is established that thou shalt not espouse thy cousin, and other cases are forbidden more than I will here relate; and they say that whosoever doth these things hath done mortal sin. Then I would have thee ask whether, for the gold that thou shalt give them, thou mayest find mercy at that Court? Assuredly, if thou doest thus, the purse that thou shalt bear will make the Pope thy friend. But if it be so mortal a sin as they say, why then are they willing to grant a dispensation for it beforehand? For the God of Heaven, who is more upright than the Pope, cannot do so; on the contrary, I know well that it would be vain to beg God's leave to break to-morrow the law and precept which He hath established; but the Pope of Rome, if my purse be full of gold, will be more courteous and complaisant to me. "The fowler," (quoth he) "the wider he stretches his nets, the sooner are the birds caught; so likewise the more divers sins we have imposed by Our decrees, the sooner will ye be found transgressing, and much more will ye be subject to Our power. For such sins may be redeemed in Our court for money; and We will that Our table may be all the heavier laden with meat, Our stables the more crowded with great palfreys. . . . Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's: but We would fain have both, for

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We bear the estate of both in this world. We have God's full power, wherefore We Ourselves desire to receive outright such part of His possessions, as that none shall take his share with Us, unless We may surely see that it shall be repaid to Us twofold. So do We make God Our profit, as to leave naught of all the gold that We can get, neither great nor small; for prelates and cowed monks, curates and vicars, are so subject to Us, that they dare not gainsay Our will. They must render gold at Our pleasure without murmuring, or their sanctuary shall be interdicted by Our decree. But We now bear Caesar's office, from whom We have inherited the city of Rome, where it is Our will to take due tribute from all folk; nay, the very Jew in his degree, and the common prostitute, shall not be quit of their payment;<sup>1</sup> thus have We found what Caesar in his days forgot, that vices are current for ready money. I trow that, when Constantine first gave to the Pope of Rome full possession of earthly power, the King of Glory in His foresight bade a celestial voice cry aloud from the heights of heaven, saying that the condition of Holy Church, with all her priests, would never be so good and Christian as that of their forefathers had been, for the venom that must needs grow from these their earthly possessions."

<sup>1</sup> The medieval Popes nearly always protected the Jews; but contemporaries relate this only with indignation, for it was a highly profitable policy, commending itself to money-loving and far-sighted rulers of every kind but scandalizing all their subjects. Gower is not the only satirist to point out that prostitutes enjoyed the same toleration in Rome as Jews, and for a similar consideration.

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The best introduction to the history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would be to compile a catena of passages in which churchmen of the five preceding centuries express their despair of their own times. Such a catena would fill a whole volume of this size: for in the Middle Ages pessimism is not confined to a Carlyle and a Ruskin here and there; it is the prevailing tone of all, or practically all, who pause to pass any judgment on the world around them. Mr C. F. G. Masterman, M.P., reviewing my *From St Francis to Dante* in the *Speaker*, deplored that I had quoted so much from writers who took a dark view of their own generation. I replied by challenging him to name a few medieval writers who express any more hopeful view; no such name was suggested. Yet the recognition of medieval facts is absolutely essential to the comprehension not only of the Reformation period but of our own age; Mr Masterman's *Condition of England* and Dr Gairdner's *Lollardy and the Reformation*, with all their ability and learning, are vitiated by a false perspective of history. In spite of all that is sordid and depressing in our own age, in spite of all the wickedness and unrest that were let loose by the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century, it must still be borne in mind that the past had been even worse; and that, if we face the facts of the Middle Ages as frankly as we are often compelled to face those of our own time, we shall recognize man as an improving animal—or, in other words, we shall see that God was not mistaken in judging His creation to be good. A few examples will here suffice; but these few at least are necessary to mark the significance of the epoch which gave birth to the modern world. The most damning complaints of all, as to the general immorality of the clergy, are omitted as much as possible here because I have already emphasized them sufficiently elsewhere.

Pope Gregory X held an ecumenical Council in 1274 for the reform of Christendom. As a preliminary, he wisely requested some of the most distinguished churchmen of the time to send in a formal statement of matters requiring correction. Two of these have survived: (i) by Humbert de Romans, Minister General of the Dominicans (Labbe-Mansi, *Concilia* xxiv, 109 ff.), and (ii) by the Bishop of Olmütz (Raynaldus, *Annales*, 1273, § vi). Both give substantially the same picture; I quote briefly from the former as the greater man and the more explicit writer.

### 112. A PROGRAMME OF REFORM

WITH regard to divine service, it would seem wise to enact that men should not be compelled to keep new feast-days beyond the authority of the Roman Church; and that, except on the greater holy-days, instituted by the Church, men should be permitted to work after divine service, both because sins are the more multiplied on holy-days at the bidding of wicked sloth, in taverns, dances, and brothels; and also because the



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work-days are scarce enough now for the poor to earn their daily bread. . . . Fourthly, that divine service should be so abbreviated that it might be said and heard from end to end, and devoutly. Fifthly, that in great churches there should be a sufficient number of clerics at every service. . . .

In the parishes, the first thing blamable seems to be that some are too poor for any good parson to take. Secondly, the rich parishes are given to such as will not or cannot reside. Thirdly, vicars are put in, not of the best, but of the cheapest who will do the work. Fourthly, they are not given for God's sake to the best, but to unworthy men, sometimes for money from hand to hand, or for promises, or for services done. Fifthly, that [clergy] of evil fame are not corrected, but are oftentimes suffered to sin freely for the sake of bribes. Sixthly, some manual should be written for the instruction of the ignorant and unlearned in the duties of their office, seeing that they know not the Scriptures. As to the common run of the clergy, many of them are possessed with gluttony, lechery, vainglory, wastefulness, idleness, and many other evils, which should be corrected for the scandal that they give to the laity. Pardoners defile the Church with lies and filthiness, and render it a laughing-stock. Secondly, they bribe the prelates, who therefore suffer them to say whatsoever they will. Thirdly, in their briefs or cartels they lyingly feign so many indulgences, and expound them so ill, that scarce any man believeth. Fourthly, they gain much money, yet send little to headquarters; and they deceive the people with false relics.

In 1311 Clement V pursued the same policy for his Ecumenical Council of Vienne. The reports of two distinguished bishops have survived: (i) Guillaume le Maire of Angers (*Mélanges Historiques. Choix de Documents*, t. II, 1877), and (ii) Guillaume Durand of Mende (*Tractatus de Modo Generalis Concilii habendi*, Paris, 1671). Both are very lengthy documents, and most unflattering on every page.

### 113. A SECOND

(Le Maire, p. 477.)

IN many parts of the kingdom of France there has grown up an irreligious custom—nay rather, an abominable abuse—

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namely that, on Sundays and other principal holydays dedicated to the Majesty of the Most High, whereupon Christian folk should cease from servile work, come to church, spend their time in divine service, and receive the food of the word of God which they need so sorely, from prelates and others who have commission to preach—on such days they keep markets and fairs, pleas and assizes. Whence it cometh to pass that the faithful, savouring more of the flesh than of the spirit, leave the church and her services, and flock to such places, where they pursue their trades or their lawsuits. Wherefore on those holy days, whereon God should above all be worshipped, the Devil is worshipped instead; churches stand empty; lawcourts, taverns and workshops ring with quarrels, tumults, blasphemies; perjuries and crimes of almost every kind are there perpetrated. From this it followeth that God's law, the articles of faith, the other things pertaining to the Christian religion and the salvation of souls are almost utterly ignored by the faithful: God is blasphemed, the Devil is revered, souls perish, the Catholic Faith is wounded; wherefore it is most needful to apply some salutary remedy to so great an error and abuse.

### 114. A THIRD

(Durand, p. 133.)

THAT none feast within the Churches, nor hold lawcourts therein; and that the gilds wherein both clergy and layfolk swill together [*se ingurgitant*] be abolished: and that whatsoever is there spent be given to the poor. . . . (296) The whole Church might be reformed if the Church of Rome would begin by removing evil examples from itself, and then gradually from the prelates and the rest: by which evil examples men are scandalized, and the whole people are as it were infected, and (as Esaias saith) they that rule over them suffer God's name to be blasphemed for this. . . . (300) To the same effect are these defraudings of alms, this restriction of hospitality, the diminution of ecclesiastics deputed to divine service, and the wandering abroad of prelates and parish priests who flee from

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their cities or their parishes on feast-days and other church solemnities. . . . For in all lands whereunto the sound of the Apostles hath gone forth, the holy Church of God, and especially the most holy Church of Rome, is in evil repute; and all cry and publish it abroad that within her bosom all men, from the greatest even unto the least, have set their hearts upon covetousness. For, since covetousness is grown in the churches, as it grew in the Roman Empire, the law hath perished from the priest, and the seeing of visions from the prophets, as Jerome saith. . . . (309) That the whole Christian folk take from the clergy pernicious examples of the sin of gluttony is clear and notorious, since the said clergy feast more luxuriously and splendidly, and with more dishes, than kings and princes. . . . (316) The sin of sloth and negligence is most deeply rooted in God's Holy Church, and all Christian folk take an evil example therefrom. For there are few among the clergy who are not called, or who could not be called, negligent in the offices which pertain to them, and for which stipends or church benefices were founded. . . . (318) The negligence of learning and the plague of ignorance might be remedied; . . . in the conferring of all sacred Orders and ecclesiastical ministries enquiry should be made whether the candidate be of mature age, steadfast morals, and knowledge of letters. . . . (319) We might remedy the neglect of learning among parish clergy if we obeyed the Council of Toledo, wherein it was decreed that, when a priest is ordained to a parish, he should receive from his bishop an official booklet, containing all that pertaineth to the cure of souls, in order that such clergy may be instructed before they approach their appointed parishes, lest they offend through ignorance of Holy Scripture. . . . (325) Let the first [clerical] tonsure be conferred upon no man unless he know how to read and chant competently. . . . (326) And if all were certain that they could not otherwise come among the clergy, then all would strive better to learn, and their parents and kinsfolk to provide for them [in the schools]: especially if they were certain that they could not attain to ecclesiastical benefices unless they had sufficient learning; from which study and laborious attention they are now discouraged, seeing how by the favour of the authorities, of their parents,

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and of rich folk, young men insufficient and illiterate are unduly preferred to those who surpass them in literature and merit, through the disordered ambition of rectors and prelates; and it would be better for the Lord's priesthood and clergy to have a few sufficient ministers who might worthily perform God's work than to have many and innumerable of the unprofitable sort; who, according to St Clement, bring a grievous burden and confusion upon God's holy Church....(329) There is also a manifest negligence concerning the cure of souls herein, that the Roman Church giveth dispensations to many, without evident necessity or utility, that they may hold a plurality of cures of souls, and that they shall not be bound to reside personally for any very long time; and men with such cures of souls—nay, even prelates—are detained for long times at the Roman Court, and in divers manners absent themselves from the churches committed to them and to their care.... (330) This negligence of cures appeareth manifestly herein, that not only simple cures of souls, but even double cures (and, which is more detestable, prelacies) are committed to men who, through defect of age or of learning or other causes, are notoriously and publicly known among the laity and others to be incapable of such cure of souls; for the perdition whereof (though souls be more precious than all earthly and corruptible possessions) they seem to care little; so that, by a general abuse on the part of prelates, churches are committed to such men. . . . Such men cry not aloud, nor preach, nor warn the people of their crimes, nor hear confessions, nor meddle in the least with the cure of souls, but only with gathering their revenues. . . .(334) Another neglect of correction is this; that grievous, (nay, most grievous) offences and crimes perpetrated by churchmen, when indeed they are punished at all, are punished in money; although such criminals should justly be committed to a lifelong prison; . . . the remedy whereof would seem to be that these pecuniary fines which are received by the Church for crimes and from ecclesiastics, should be applied to pious uses, as some Doctors say that they should in justice be applied [even now]....(335) This neglect [of divine service] appeareth but too plainly in the clergy, both in the Head and in the Members; and would that the word of Esaias were not true of

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the clergy, when he saith, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me"! . . . (337) There are few of the said prelates and higher clergy who come to say or hear God's service solemnly and without [other] occupation or conversation; but they say it amidst other occupations, and sometimes without chant, undevoutly and with omissions of syllables and insufficiently. . . . Moreover the canons and ecclesiastical dignitaries, while divine service is proceeding, frequently hold conversations together, or sleep, or disturb the service; and some, leaving the choir during the worship of God, walk about the church lest they lose their distribution, mingling with the talk of men and women, with their jests and laughter and applause. . . . (338) And many princes, while they cause the solemnities of mass to be celebrated in their presence, give an almost continuous audience to men in other matters, or busy themselves with other things, paying no attention to the service nor saying their prayers.<sup>1</sup> Some of the nobles, great men, and others of the people, do indeed come to church while Christ's Body is to be elevated, and withdraw in haste when this hath been done, scarcely saying a *Paternoster* within the church walls: [*he goes on to quote councils which had vainly forbidden this abuse*]. (340) Moreover, divine service and worship are neglected; for holy days and Sundays are not celebrated or kept as the laws bid. . . . and sometimes on those days more sins are committed than in the whole week; nor doth the people seem to care for divine things, but only for songs, jests, dances, caperings, or foul and dishonest chants, even within the churches or churchyards, busying themselves day and night with such vanities. . . . (346) Another negligence concerning divine service is the matter of church ornaments; for in many parish churches, (and especially in such as are in the presentation, collation, or disposition of exempt Religious,) there is a general defect of vestments and priestly garments; as also of books, chalices, and other church

<sup>1</sup> At Strasbourg the civic authorities regularly gave business audiences and heard law-cases in the Cathedral during mass. Even more significant is the fact that St Louis is praised for having *very seldom* done this, and that Pope John XXII, in a private letter of advice to Edward II, recommended him not to fall into this habit (*Acta Sanctorum*, August 25th, § 38; *Lanercost Chronicle*, Appendix, p. 420).

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ornaments. And in some churches the vestments are so vile and sordid that they raise disgust [*abominationem inducunt*]. In some churches the celebrants lay their sacerdotal vestments over their tunic or jacket or tabard, under the people's eyes, without a rochet or Roman shirt. In others, the ministrants or servers wear no surplice or clerical habit; and in some Religious Orders the lay-brethren serve the priests; and, in the general confession which is made by the priest before the Introit of the mass, the said laymen or clerkings or boys answer the celebrant like another priest, thus in a manner absolving him from the sins which he hath generally confessed, though they have no such power [of absolution].

Durand's and Le Maire's complaints probably contributed a good deal to the decree *Gravi nimirum* issued by Clement in this Council, which sets forth how "many church ministers, casting away the modesty of their Order,...presume to say or sing the Canonical hours with undue haste, and skipping of words, and frequent intermingling of extraneous, vain, profane, and dishonest talk, coming late into choir and often leaving the church without reasonable cause before the end of service, sometimes bringing hawks with them or causing them to be brought, and leading hunting-dogs." The decree goes on to speak equally strongly of the indecent dances and songs in churches and cemeteries, the sordid vestments and furniture, and the offence to God; but its inefficacy is proved by countless documents of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. See Peter Schott's letter in this volume, no. 126.

Chaucer's Good Parson, "full loth were him to cursen for his tithes," may be better understood by a perusal of the rhymed *Instructions for Parish Priests* written about 1420 by John Myrc, a Canon Regular of Lilleshall (E.E.T.S. 1868). In the following Extract (p. 21 ff.) the author is compelled by the exigences of his subject to lapse into prose. In the long list of crimes which earn this grisly curse, that of withholding tithes is emphasized by threefold repetition.

### 115. PULPIT CURSING

THE great sentence I writē here,  
That twice or thrice in the year  
Thou shalt pronounce, withouten let,  
When the parish is together met.

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Thou shalt pronounce this hideous thing,  
With cross and candle and bell-knelling.  
Speak out clearly, fear not thou wound,  
That all may thee understand. . . .

*(In this manner should the sentence be pronounced:.)*

By the authority of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost and of our Lady Saint Mary God's mother of heaven, and all other Virgins, and Saint Michael [and all other Angels, and St Peter] and all other Apostles and Saint Stephen and all other Martyrs, and Saint Nicholas and all other Confessors and of all the holy Saints of heaven; we accursen and bannen and departen from all good deeds and prayers of Holy Church, and of all these Saints, and damn into the pain of hell, all those that have done these articles that we have said before, till they come to amendment: we accursen them by the authority of the court of Rome, within and without, sleeping or waking, going and sitting, standing and riding, lying above earth and under earth, speaking and crying and drinking; in wood, in water, in field, in town; accursen them Father and Son and Holy Ghost! accursen them Angels and Archangels and all the nine Orders of Heaven! accursen them Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles and all God's Disciples and all holy Innocents, Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, Monks, Canons, Hermits, Priests and Clerks! that they have no part of mass nor matins nor of none other good prayers that be done in holy church nor in none other places, but that the pains of hell be their meed with Judas that betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ! and the life of them be put out of the book of life till they come to amendment and satisfaction made! *Fiat, fiat. Amen.*

Then thou thy candle shalt cast to ground,  
And spit thereto the samē stound. [hour  
And let also the bellēs knell  
To make their heartēs the morē grill. [afraid

## THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

Myrc wrote also the *Liber Festivalis*, a book of sermons for the use of parish priests. Caxton printed a free version of this in 1483, and Pynson reprinted it in 1502. The following sermon for the dedication day of a church (the German *Kirchweih*) is taken from Pynson's edition, with a few corrections and additions from the MS. published in 1905 by the Early English Text Society.

### 116. THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

GOOD men and women, such a day [naming the day] ye shall have your dedication day, that is your church holy day, ye shall come to church and hear divine service in the worship of God for three causes the which the church is hallowed for; that is, for the church cleansing, for devout praying, and for the dead bodies burying. The first is for the church cleansing. The church is ordained for all the people that come thither should be in perfect charity and there meet with God, for God is ever there present. And when all the people come so together at this assignment, it pleaseth God much to hear them and hear good words in that place: but when the fiend seeth any man busy thereto, he is full sorry, and seeketh all the ways that he can or may to let him from the church, for they should not come to the presence of God. Then when holy fathers knew the malice of the fiend, they ordained the church to be hallowed, and so by good prayers the fiend is driven out, but if any cursed liver bring him in again that is out [of] charity or in deadly sin, [who] is with the fiend and the fiend with him. But, how the fiend is driven away by the hallowing, I will tell you by ensample that is written in *Legenda Aurea*. Saint Gregory saith in a book that is called [Dialogus]: On a time as a church was on hallowing, a swine ran among the people to and fro, and so ran out of the church door; and that was a fiend that ran away. But yet, the next night after, he came again and made such a noise as though all the church should have fallen down, and then came never more again. But there be many lewd people that say their prayers, they were as good at home as at church, but they err foul against the faith of holy church. For if there be any man or woman that hath a matter to speak with his good friend, and would fain have his intent,



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he will go home to his house goodly and lowly in hope to speed the better. Right so if any man would pray God devoutly he should come to church. There is God, for he that is in clean life and prayeth to God, he speaketh with Him; for many of you wot not how ye should pray. The setting of the church giveth you knowledge, for the church is set in the east; and so, when ye pray, set your hearts in the east, [thinking that Paradise is in the east, and] praying heartily for mercy with perfect charity; though ye be put out of your heritage by malice of the fiend that is enemy to your souls, for that we should not have the joy of paradise that he was in, and lost it by his pride. Also we lost it by our father's trespass, Adam. Let us think that Christ died in the east, and therefore let us pray busily into the east, that we may be of the number that He died for. Also let us [think] that He shall come out of the east to the doom; wherefore let us pray heartily to Him and busily that we may have grace of contrition in our hearts of our misdeeds, with shrift and satisfaction; that we may stand that day on the right hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so be of the number that shall be saved and come to everlasting bliss and joy, and that we may escape that horrible rebuke that shall be given to all them that shall be damned and go to everlasting pain, that will not be sorry and repent them and ask mercy in this world.

And thus for devout prayers holy church was ordained to be hallowed. For God saith thus, *Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur*, "Mine house is called a house of prayers," but it is now made an house of rowning,<sup>1</sup> whispering, crowing, clattering, scorning, tales and simple speaking, moving of vanity and many simple words and lewd. We read how St Gregory was at mass on a time and St Austin was his deacon and bade the people turn to the pope's blessing. Then he saw two women rowne together in the pope's chapel, and the fiend sat in their necks writing a great roll, and it lacked parchment, and he drew it out with his teeth; and so it fell out of his claws, and St Austin saw it and went and took it up. Then the pope was wroth and asked him why he laughed him to scorn; and he showed him what the fiend had written of the women. And

<sup>1</sup> Muttering.

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then he came to the women and asked them what they had said all the Mass-time: and they said, "Our *Pater noster*." Then the pope bade read the roll to them that the fiend had written; and St Gregory read it, and there was never a good word therein. Then they kneeled down and asked mercy, and besought the pope to pray for them, and so he did, and brought them out of the fiend's books. Also holy church [is hallowed for the long resting]; for, when a man is dead, he is brought to the church to his rest. Sometime the people were buried at home, as poor people, and the rich were buried on the hill tops, and some at the foot of the hill in tombs made of rocks. But the savour was so great and grievous [to them that lived], that holy fathers ordained churchyards to bury the people in, for two causes. One is, to be prayed for as holy church useth. And another is, for the body shall lie there without travail; for the fiend hath no manner of power to anything within Christian burials, but if so be that the body be not worthy to be buried in such holy ground. For, as John Beleth telleth that, there should none other body be buried in the church, but if it be the patron that defend it from bodily enemies, or the parson, vicar, priest or clerk that defend the church from ghostly enemies with their prayers; for some have been buried there and cast out again on the morrow, and all the clothes left still in the grave. An angel came on a time to a warden of a church, and bade him go to the bishop and bid him cast out the body that he had buried there, or else he shall be dead [himself] within xxx days; and so he was, for he would not do as he was bode.

Also we read in *Gestis Romanorum* that an angel told an holy bishop [Eucharius] how that Charles the king of France was damned, for he took away the right of holy church that good people had given tofore; and bade him go and open his tomb and see it. Then the bishop took with him other people and opened the tomb, and there came out a great dragon and flew forth and left the tomb brenning within as it had been an oven mouth: and thus to bury in holy places is but little avail to them that be damned. Also there be many that walk on nights when they be buried in holy places, but that is not along of the fiend but of grace of God to get them help, and some be guilty and have no rest. It happened also beside the abbey

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of Lilleshall that four men stole an ox of the abbot's of the same place to their larder. And the abbot did a sentence cursed therefore, with the abbey; so three of them were shriven and asked mercy and were assoiled, but the fourth died and was not assoiled and had not forgiveness. So, when he was dead, the spirit went by night and feared all the people about, that after sun going down durst no man walk. Then, as the parish priest, [Sir Thomas Wodward,] went on a night with God's body to housel a sick man, this spirit went with him, and told him what he was and why he went, and prayed the priest to go to his wife, and they should go both to the abbot and make him amends for his trespass, and pray him for the love of God of forgiveness, and so to assoil him; for he might have no rest. Anon the abbot assoiled him, and he went to rest and joy for evermore. To the which joy and bliss bring us all He that died for us on the rood-tree. Amen.

Mr Shaw's brilliant play has attracted fresh attention to Joan of Arc and the Inquisition. His presentation of this latter subject, however interesting, will scarcely be taken as final; and readers may welcome fresh opportunities of judging for themselves.

Johann Nider studied at the Universities of Vienna and Cologne, became professor at Vienna, and prior of the Dominican convents at Nuremberg and at Bâle. He distinguished himself as preacher and as inquisitor. In 1431 he was called as a representative to the General Council of Bâle, and entrusted later with an important embassy on behalf of that Council. His *Formicarius* and *Preceptorium* show him as a learned, pious, and naturally kind-hearted man; but he was also a zealous witch-finder. I subjoin here his account of St Joan and of other unnamed visionaries of his time; they are of great interest as showing the ideas of a German inquisitor, who had far better sources of information than most of his contemporaries, as to the action of his fellow-inquisitors in France. Both Extracts are taken from the edition of *Formicarius* published at Douai in 1602. Nider wrote the book between 1431, when he joined the Council of Bâle, and his death in 1438; St Joan was burned in May 1431.

### 116 A. JOAN OF ARC

(p. 385.)

*PUPIL.* In your opinion, have some good men been deceived by sorceresses or witches in our own day?

*Master.* In what here follows, I suspend my judgment;

## JOAN OF ARC

but I will tell you what is repeated by public rumour and report. We have in our days the distinguished professor of divinity, brother Heinrich Kaltyseren, Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity. Last year, while he was exercising his inquisitorial office in the city of Cologne, as he himself told me, he found in the neighbourhood a certain maiden who always went about in man's dress, bore arms and dissolute garments<sup>1</sup> like one of the nobles' retainers; she danced in dances with men, and was so given to feasting and drink that she seemed altogether to overpass the bounds of her sex, which she did not conceal. And because at that time, (as, alas! even to-day) the see of Trèves was sorely troubled by two rivals contending for the bishopric, she boasted that she could and would set one party upon the throne, even as Maid Joan, of whom I shall presently speak, had done shortly before with Charles king of France, by confirming him in his kingdom. Indeed, this woman claimed to be that same Joan, raised up by God. One day therefore, when she had come into Cologne with the young count of Württemberg, who protected and favoured her, and there, in the sight of the nobles, had performed wonders which seemed due to magic art, she was at last diligently scrutinized and publicly cited by the aforesaid inquisitor, in order that she might be examined. For she was said to have cut a napkin in pieces, and suddenly to have restored it whole in the sight of the people; to have thrown a glass against the wall and broken it, and to have repaired it in a moment, and to have shown many such idle devices. But the wretched woman would not obey the commands of the Church; the count protected her from arrest and brought her secretly out of Cologne; thus she did indeed escape from the inquisitor's hands but not from the sentence of excommunication. Thus bound under curse, she quitted Germany for France, where she married a certain knight, to protect herself against ecclesiastical interdict and the sword. Then a certain priest, or rather pimp, seduced this witch with talk of love; so that she stole away with him at length and went to Metz, where she lived as his concubine and showed all men openly by what spirit she was led.

<sup>1</sup> Fifteenth-century moralists are always severe, and not altogether without reason, upon the prevailing fashion of doublet and hose.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Moreover, there was lately in France, within the last ten years, a maid of whom I have already spoken, named Joan, distinguished, as was thought, both for her prophetic spirit and for the power of her miracles. For she always wore man's dress, nor could all the persuasions of any doctors [of divinity] bend her to put these aside and content herself with woman's garments, especially considering that she openly professed herself a woman and a maid. "In these masculine garments," she said, "in token of future victory, I have been sent by God to preach both by word and by dress, to help Charles, the true king of France, and to set him firm upon his throne from whence the king of England and the duke of Burgundy are striving to chase him"; for, at that time, those two were allied together, and oppressed France most grievously with battle and slaughter. Joan, therefore, rode constantly like a knight with her lord, predicted many successes to come, was present at some victories in the field, and did other like wonders, whereat not only France marvelled, but every realm in Christendom. At last this Joan came to such a pitch of presumption that, before France had been yet recovered, she already sent threatening letters to the Bohemians, among whom there were then a multitude of heretics. Thenceforward lay-folk and ecclesiastics, Regulars and Cloisterers began to doubt of the spirit whereby she was ruled, whether it were devilish or divine. Then certain men of great learning wrote treatises concerning her, wherein they expressed not only diverse but also adverse opinions as to the Maid. But, after that she had given great help to king Charles, and had confirmed him for some years upon his throne, then at last, by God's will, as it is believed, she was taken in arms by the English and cast into prison. A great multitude were then summoned, of masters both in Canon and in Civil Law, and she was examined for many days. And, as I have heard from Master Nicolas Amici,<sup>1</sup> Licentiate of Theology, who was ambassador for the University of Paris, she at length confessed that she had a familiar angel of God, which, by many conjectures, and proofs,

<sup>1</sup> This seems a scribal error for Nicolas Midi, who is among the Parisian masters named in the proceedings of May 12th, May 23rd, etc.: *e.g.* T. Douglas Murray, *Jeanne d'Arc*, pp. 119-121.

## JOAN OF ARC

and by the opinion of the most learned men, was judged to be an evil spirit; so that this spirit rendered her a sorceress; wherefore they permitted her to be burned at the stake by the common hangman; and the king of England gave a like account of this story, at great length, in a letter to our emperor Sigismund. At this same time two women arose near Paris, preaching publicly that they had been sent by God to help Maid Joan; and, as I heard from the very lips of the aforesaid Master Nicolas, they were forthwith arrested as witches or sorceresses by the Inquisitor for France, and examined by many Doctors of Theology, and found at length to have been deceived by the ravings of the evil spirit. When therefore one of these women saw that she had been misled by an angel of Satan, she relinquished that which she had begun, by the advice of her masters, and, as was her duty, abjured her error forthwith. But the other abode in her obstinacy and was burned.

*Pupil.* I cannot sufficiently marvel how the frail sex can dare to rush into such presumptuous things.

*Master.* These things are marvellous to simple folk like thee; but they are not rare in the eyes of wise men. For there are three things in nature, which, if they transgress the limits of their own condition, whether by diminution or by excess, attain to the highest pinnacle whether of goodness or of evil. These are, the tongue, the ecclesiastic, and the woman; all these are commonly best of all, so long as they are guided by a good spirit, but worst of all if guided by an evil spirit.

## II 6B. TORTURE AND EVIDENCE

(p. 226.)

*MASTER.* Hear, therefore, what befel a certain woman whom I saw at Regensburg in the days of this present Council of Bâle [*i.e.* after 1431], and whom I helped to examine. She was an unmarried girl, nor had she ever a husband, nor was she suspected of incontinence; but she had often changed her abode from city to city, from house to house, and this had gone on for very many years. Then, at the age of about fifty-three,

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she came to Regensburg, where she uttered certain very incautious words concerning the Rule of the Faith; on which account she was accused before the vicar of the bishop of Regensburg, who clapt her into prison. Meanwhile there came the lord John de Polomar, archdeacon of Barcelona, as envoy of the said General Council in the matter of the Bohemian [rebellion]; a man full of all devotion, and singularly learned both in Canon and in Civil Law; I was his companion and colleague in those days upon the same mission. Therefore we were called in to the examination of the said woman, wherein she was daily proved, and found to be in many errors; yet she seemed to have no hurt in her brain that would cause defect of reason, for she answered very astutely to each objection made against her, and, when we questioned her, she answered with great deliberation and caution to avoid contradicting herself. For she said that she had had a spirit of God, or divine revelations; she refused obedience to the pope in matters which he had ill disposed; she affirmed herself more blessed than the chiefs of the Apostles had been in this present life; she believed herself inerrant or impeccable, and, in short, she asserted both in word and by signs of her head that she was the mother of the whole Church of Christ, which was represented at this Council of Bâle. I therefore, and many who were present, strove by persuasive words from Holy Scripture to get these wayward thoughts out of the woman's head; but there we profited nothing; for she answered boldly that she knew she was in no error with regard to the aforesaid matters, but rather that her examiners erred; and thus she showed herself ready to go through fire in defence of her own truth. When we saw this, the above-mentioned archdeacon said unto the Doctors both of Divinity and of other Faculties, whereof there were many present: "*Ye shall see that vexation alone shall make her understand* [Is. xxviii, 19]; wherefore it is necessary that she be racked by the torture of public justice, somewhat slowly in proportion as her sex may be able to endure it; but you" (this he said secretly to me and to my companion in the [Dominican] Order, a certain very devout and learned Lector) "show in this woman's sight that you will not be present at her torture, and, if you please, absent yourselves, in

## TORTURE AND EVIDENCE

order that her goodwill towards you may the more endure, and thus, when she hath been humbled by torture, you will then be the better fitted to convert her." So we did, and all things were done as I have described. And they asked of her, while she was being tortured, from whom she had learned her errors and whether she had any disciple or accomplice therein; for on these points she had never before given anything but denial, saying that no man had taught her these errors, nor had she taught any woman, but that she had believed them silently in her own heart, taught (as she said) by an angel or by the Spirit of God. Therefore, having been tortured for a little while, she added nothing new, confessed no man's guilt but her own, and abode constantly by her assertions. And I think she spake truth; yet she was much humbled by the vexation of her limbs; wherefore she was brought back to her prison-tower and, at the archdeacon's bidding, my companion and I visited the wretched woman that same evening. She could scarce stir for pain; but when she saw us she broke into loud lamentations, and told us in good faith how grievously she had been hurt. So we, considering that she had been humbled, and that she had a good opinion of us, told her many stories to show how many eminent and learned men had been deceived by incautious revelations and misled by the angel of Satan; and we adduced many citations from Holy Scripture to show how frail is the female sex when unaided. Then, by Christ's grace, she began to change her mind for the better, and to promise that she would follow me and my companion in all things. Therefore she believed herself to have been deceived, and of her own accord she made sacramental confession to me of all that she had done from her youth up, and showed herself ready to revoke her error publicly and to repent. Thus on the third day after, before the whole city of Regensburg, while many wept for joy and compassion, she performed all that I have said.



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No mere extracts can do justice to St Bernardino's mission-sermons, yet no book of this kind could be complete without some specimens. The following are taken from the course of 45 sermons preached in the great public square of his native Siena during August and September of the year 1427, and in the 48th year of his age. How these sermons were recorded, the writer of the *Prologue* tells us himself.<sup>1</sup> "Moreover, how well-pleasing and acceptable to God were the labours which the Saint endured for His honour and to the profit of his fellows, is shown among other things by this present Book, which, as it setteth a new style and rule for preachers, so God hath willed that, (as it were beyond all fashions hitherto established,) these sermons should be collected and written for the love and increase of devotion. Wherefore the great and mighty God inspired one Benedetto di Maestro Bartolomeo, citizen of Siena and shearman of cloth; who, having a wife and many children, few worldly goods and much virtue, and leaving for that time his daily work, gathered and wrote these present sermons word by word, not omitting a single word which he did not write even as the Saint preached it....And, that ye may note the virtues and graces of this shearman Benedetto, as he stood at the sermon he would write with a style on waxen tablets; and then, when the preaching was ended, he would return to his workshop and commit to paper all that he had already written on the aforesaid tablets: so that on the same day, before setting himself to his own work, he had twice written the sermon. Whosoever will take good heed of this, shall find it as marvellous in performance as generous in conception, that within so brief a space he should have written so full a matter twice over, not leaving one syllable unwritten—nay, not the slightest—of all that fell from that sacred mouth, as may be manifestly seen in this present Book."

The reporter does in fact note even the preacher's interjections, the occasional protests of his hearers, and the casual interruptions natural to these open-air sermons—"You there, by the fountain, selling your wares there, move off and sell them elsewhere! Don't you hear, you there by the fountain?"—"Let us wait till that bell has stopped."—"Give it to that dog! send him off! send him that way! give it him with a slipper!... That's it; when one dog is in trouble all the rest fall upon him! Enough now, let him go" (II, 270; III, 305, 405).

Many brief extracts from the sermons are given in Paul Thureau-Dangin's entertaining biography (*St Bernardin de Sienne*: not very adequately translated into English by Baroness von Hügel). Those which I give here are as continuous as possible, from the five sermons on Marriage and Widowhood, which not only show the saint at his best as a stylist, but perhaps throw more light on medieval conditions than any others.

<sup>1</sup> See page 4 of *Le Prediche Volgari di San Bernardino da Siena*. Ed. L. Banchi (3 vols., Siena, 1880). A far greater number of Latin skeletons for sermons, drawn up by the saint himself, may be found in his collected works (ed. Père de la Haye. Paris, 1636, and Lyons, 1650). These also are full of significant passages, of which I have room here for one only.

## WIVES AND WIDOWS

### 117. WIVES AND WIDOWS

(Extracts from Sermons XVIII-XXII, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Luke x, 27.)

WE have to speak this morning of the love and affection that the man should bear to his wife, and she to her husband. . . . She who is wise hath brought her daughter to this morning's sermon: she who is but so-so, hath left her in bed. O! how much better hadst thou done to bring her to hear this true doctrine! But to the point.

Let us see this morning the three foundations of my discourse. The first is called *Profit*, the second *Pleasure*, and the third *Honesty* or *Virtue*, which is all one. . . .

Let us begin with the first, with Profit. If a thing be of little profit, thou lovest it little. . . . See now the world's love: do two vicious folk love each other?—Yea indeed.—Why then?—for some profit that they find. O worldlings, if the profit be small, small shall be the friendship betwixt you! Thou shopman, doth such and such an one come and get him hosen at thy shop?—Yes—Lovest thou him?—Yes—Wherefore? for thine own profit, I say. For, were he to go to another shop, thou wouldst have no more profit of him, and no more friendship. So also with the barber: take away the profit, and thou hast taken the friendship. Why, if one be a barber, and another go to be shaven of him, and the barber flay his cheek, be sure that he would lose all love for him, and go thither no more. Why then? Because the man is neither profitable in his eyes, nor pleasant, nor honest. I knew a man who was at a barber's shop for the shaving, and who cried, "Ha, what dost thou?" "What do I?" quoth the barber; "why, I shave thee." "Nay," (quoth the other) "thou flayest me rather!" Let this suffice for the matter of Profit.

Now let us add Pleasure to Profit, as with the man who entertaineth a mistress that keepeth his house, washeth for him, cooketh for him, layeth his table and so forth; and with all this profit he hath also the pleasure of the flesh: all the more is their friendship. Yet if she be of swinish nature, unkempt, unwashed, careless of her household, then is the love and

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friendship so much the less. Well and good for a while; but presently, if she fall sick, to the hospital she goeth! Why shouldst thou make bile for her sake? gone is all thy love, for thou hast neither pleasure nor profit from her. . . . This is no true love: true love should be riveted by the three corners: true love is as God's love, which hath in itself Profit and Pleasure and Honesty to boot. . . . Moreover, each should seek above all for goodness [in his spouse], and then for other advantages; but goodness first, goodness first of all. Consider now and think of such as choose their wives for other reasons; for example, of such as take a wife for her good dowry's sake; if then they be affianced, and the dowry come not, what (thinkest thou) shall be the love betwixt them both? A love stuck together with spittle! Nay, even though the dowry come in due time, yet is this an inordinate love, for thou hast not looked to the true aim; many a time hath money driven men to do many things whereof they have afterwards bitterly repented. Wherefore I say to you, lady, take not for thine husband the man who would fain take thy money and not thy self; take rather him who would take thee first and afterwards thy money with thee; for if he love thy money more than thee, thou art in evil case. . . . Behold! I am neither Pope nor Emperor; would that I were! This I say, for that I would proclaim a custom, if I could, that all women should go dressed in one fashion, even as the Roman women who all go dressed in linen; for their magnificence they all wear white linen, on back and head, the wives of princes no less than other women. And when they go mourning, they go all clad in sombre colours; there, truly, is a fashion that pleaseth me well. When they go to pardons, they go in light attire: no labour of drawn thread in their garments, no spoiling of the stuff with snippings and slashings, no such spoiling of good cloth to make their bravery! Wherefore I say to thee, lady, take no husband who loveth thy stuff more than thy body. . . . Hath the man gotten the stuff without other goodness or virtue?—Yes—Then, when the woman cometh to her husband's house, the first greeting is, "Thou art come in an evil hour"; if she hear it not in word, yet at least in deed, for the man's one thought was to have her dowry. . . . Wherefore, ye ladies who have

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daughters to marry, see to it that they have the dowry of virtue to boot, if ye would have them beloved of their husbands. . . . Are the occasions of love but slender? then shall the love itself be slender. Dost thou know their nature? for example, knowest thou the nature of mine host's love for the wayfarer? The traveller cometh, and saith: God save thee, Host!—Welcome, sir—Hast thou aught to eat?—Yea, truly—Then cook me a cabbage-soup and two eggs—The meal is eaten and paid, the traveller goeth on his way, and no sooner is his back turned than that friendship is forgotten: while the eggs are yet in his belly, that friendship is already past. For it was riveted at no corner; such friendships are as frail as a pear-stalk: shake the tree, and the pears will straightway fall; there is no strong bond of love to hold them. If the friendship be frail, small is the love; if the pleasure be small, small again the love; if there be little virtue, slight love again! . . .

Wherefore I bid you all, men and women, follow virtue, that your love may be founded on these three things, Profit, Pleasure, and Honesty; then shall true friendship reign among you. And when ye have these three things, hear what David saith of you; "*Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, on the sides of thine house.*" Lo! all these three things are here. First, Honesty: *thy wife*—thine own wedded wife. Secondly, Pleasure; *as a vine*—how delightful a thing is a vine at the door of a house! Thirdly, Profit, *a fruitful vine*—rich in grapes and profitable; from which three things groweth and endureth true love between man and woman conjoined by the sacrament of Holy Matrimony: whereof I know twelve reasons, four to each point. See now, and learn them. Four, I say, are the reasons under honesty, and four under pleasure, and four under profit.

The first four, of honesty, ye shall learn to-morrow, when I shall speak of the sacrament of marriage; and I believe that, when I shall have preached to you of the right deeds of matrimony, seeing that ye have not done them, ye shall all shrive yourselves again; for ye have committed many sins which ye have never confessed. To-morrow, therefore, thou shalt see whether any bag of sins be left, and thou shalt hear into what sins I shall enter, as a cock goeth upon his dunghill. Have ye

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ever noted the cock when he cometh upon the dung? how daintily he goeth, with his wings spread aloft far from defilement, that he may fly to his post! So will I do; as a cock upon the dunghill, so will I enter thereupon; wherefore I bid you bring your daughters to-morrow, for I promise you that I believe ye have never heard a more profitable sermon. I say not [only] that your married daughters should come, I say all, both married and to marry; and in my sermon I will speak so honestly as to avoid all defilement; even the very least!—I misdoubt me sore of you; I believe so few are saved among those who are in the married state, that, of a thousand marriages, nine hundred and ninety-nine (methinks) are marriages of the devil. Ah me! deem not that Holy Matrimony is an asses' affair; when God ordained it, He ordered it not that ye should wallow therein as the swine wallow in the mire. Thou shalt come to-morrow and know the truth.—But to my subject again, and to my first four reasons; take them with discretion; 'tis a sacred matter. And I say that there are many friars who say "would that I had taken a wife!" Come to-morrow, and thou shalt say the contrary of this. I say then, there are four reasons that make for the honesty of this God-ordained marriage. Hast thou noted, when the pack sitteth ill [on a mule] and the one side weigheth more than the other? Knowest thou that a stone is laid on the other side that it may sit straight? so I say of matrimony: it was ordained that the one might aid the other in keeping the burden straight. And mark me, women, that I hold with you so far as to say that ye love your husbands better than they love you.

First reason: the spouse thou hast is the spouse ordained for thee by God. Second reason: she is espoused to thee by plighted faith. Third reason: thou shouldest love her after Christ's example. Fourth: for her own tried virtue.

First, she hath been ordained for thy spouse by God, Who ordained this from all eternity [Genesis ii, 18 and i, 28; Matt. xix, 6]. . . .

Secondly, espoused by plighted faith. Seest thou not that, when thou consentest to matrimony, a sign is given thee, to last thy whole life long? Thou, woman, receivest the ring from thy spouse, which ring thou bearest on thy finger, and

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thou settest it on that finger which hath a vein running straight to the heart, in token that thy heart consenteth to this marriage; and thou shouldst never be espoused but for thy consentient *Yes*....

Thirdly, marriage is love. What saith Paul in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians?—"Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church."... Wouldst thou have a faithful wife? Then keep faith with her. Many men would fain take a wife and can find none; knowst thou why? The man saith: I must have a wife full of wisdom—and thou thyself art a fool. This sorteth not: he-fool sorteth well with she-fool.—How wouldst thou have thy wife?—I would have her tall—and thou art a mere willow-wren; this sorteth not. There is a country where women are married by the ell-yard. It came to pass that one of these people wanted a wife, and would fain see her first: so the girl's brothers brought him to see her, and she was shown to him without shoes or head-gear; and, measuring her stature, he found her tallest of all the maidens, and he himself was one of those puny weaklings! In short, they asked of him, "Well, is she to thy mind?" "Yea, truly, she pleaseth me well." But she, seeing how miserable was his presence, said, "Yet art *thou* not to *my* mind." Lo, was that not right?—But to my point again. How wouldst thou have this thy wife?—I will have her an honest woman—and thou art dishonest: that again is not well. Once more how wouldst thou have her?—I would have her temperate—and thou art never out of the tavern: thou shalt not have her! O, how wouldst thou have this wife of thine?—I would not have her gluttonous—and thou art ever at thy *fegatelli*:<sup>1</sup> that is not well. I would have her active—and thou art a very sluggard. Peaceful—and thou wouldst storm at a straw if it crossed thy feet. Obedient—and thou obeyest neither father nor mother nor any man; thou deservest her not. I would not have a cock—well, thou art no hen. I would have her good and fair and wise and bred in all virtue.—I answer, if thou wouldst have her thus, it is fitting that thou shouldst be the same; even as thou seekest a virtuous, fair and good spouse, so think

<sup>1</sup> Slices of pig's liver, wrapped in the fat of the caul, and roasted brown.

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likewise how she would fain have a husband prudent, discreet, good, and fulfilled of all virtue. . . .

And now to my second head, of Pleasure. . . . Read Paul in the fifth chapter of his *Ephesians*; "he that loveth his wife, loveth himself."—How may this be?—Have I not already told thee that she was made of his own flesh, and by God's hand? . . . Wherefore, in the teeth of all filthy revilers, I hold with the women, and say that woman is cleaner and more precious in her flesh than man; and if a man hold the contrary, I say that he lieth in his throat, and will prove it against him. Wilt thou see? Why, tell me, did not God create man out of clay?—Yes—then, O ladies, the reason is as clear as day! For woman was made of [Adam's] flesh and bone, so that she was made of more precious things than thou. Lo! thou mayest see a daily proof how the woman is cleaner and daintier than thou. Let a man and a woman wash as well as they can or may; and, when they are thus washed, let each take clean water and wash again, and then note which of the two waters is the dirtier, and thou shalt see that the man's is far fouler than the woman's. Why is this? Why, wash a lump of clay and see the water that cometh therefrom, and see how foul it is. Again, wash a rib with the flesh thereunto appertaining, and the water will indeed be somewhat foul, yet not so foul as that wherein thou hast washed the clay. Or, to put it better, wash an unbaked brick and thou shalt make nought but broth: wash a bone, and thou shalt make none such. So say I of man and woman in their nature and origin: man is of clay, but woman is of flesh and bone. And in proof of the truth of this, man, who is of clay, is more tranquil than woman, who is of bone; for bones are always rattling.

For ye women—shame upon you, I say—for while I say my morning mass ye make such a noise that methinks I hear a very mountain of rattling bones, so great is your chattering! One crieth: Giovanna! another, Caterina! another, Francesca! Oh, the fine devotion that ye have to hear mass! To my own poor wit, it seems sheer confusion, without devotion or reverence whatsoever. Do ye not consider how we here celebrate the glorious Body of Christ, Son of God, for your salvation? Ye should therefore sit here so quiet that none need

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say *hush!* But here cometh Madonna Pigara, and will by all means sit in front of Madonna Sollecita.<sup>1</sup> No more of this! first at the mill, first grind: take your seats as ye come, and let none come hither before you.—Now to my point again. . . .



### CONJUGAL AMENITIES

From a MS. of 1456 in A. Schultz, *Deutsches Leben*, fig. 344.

Now to my third division, of Profit, under four heads. . . . Firstly, the preciousness of fruit. O how precious are the fruits of a good woman, as the Scripture saith: *By their fruits you*

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* Mrs Slow and Mrs Worry. The whole scene is a vivid commentary on Chaucer's *Prologue*, 449, and *Cant. Tales*, B., 3091. For the Proverb, see *Wife of Bath's Prologue* (*C.T.*, D., 389).



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*shall know them:* . . . Many consider not the value of a boy or a girl, and many folk who have them hold them of little worth, and when their wife brings forth a little girl, they cannot suffer her, so small is their discretion! Why, there are men who have more patience with a hen, which layeth a fresh egg daily, than with their own wedded wife: and sometimes the hen may break a pipkin or a drinking-vessel, and the man will not strike her, all for love of her egg and for fear of losing the profit thereof. O madmen thrice worthy of chains! that cannot bear with a word from their wife, who beareth such fair fruit, but if she speak a word more than he thinketh fit, forthwith he taketh the staff and will beat her; and the hen, cackling all day long without end, thou hast patience with her for her paltry egg's sake; yet the hen will perchance do thee more harm in broken vessels than she is worth; and yet thou bearest with her for her egg's sake! Many a cross-grained fellow, seeing perchance his wife less clean and delicate than he would fain see her, smiteth her without more ado; and meanwhile the hen may befoul the table, and he will suffer it. Dost thou not consider thy duty in this matter? Dost thou not see the pig, again, squeaking and squealing all day long, and always befouling thy house? Yet thou bearest with him until he be ripe for the slaughter. Thou hast patience with him, only for the profit of his flesh, that thou mayest eat thereof. Consider now, wicked fellow, consider the noble fruit of the woman, and have patience; not for every cause is it right to beat her. No!—There, enough now of this first point. . . .

The third point is the remembrance of her necessity. . . . Wherefore, as thou seest that thy wife endureth travail on every side, therefore thou, O husband, if she fall into any need, be sure thou help her to bear her pain. If she be with child or in childbirth, aid her so far as in thee lieth, for it is thy child also. Let all help her whereinsoever they may. Mark her well, how she travaileth in childbirth, travaileth to suckle the child, travaileth to rear it, travaileth in washing and cleaning by day and by night. All this travail, seest thou, is of the woman only, and the man goeth singing on his way. There was once a baron's lady who said to me: "Methinks the dear Lord our Master doth as He seeth good, and I am content to say that

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He doth well. But the woman alone beareth the pain of the children in many things—bearing them in her body, bringing them into the world, ruling them, and all this oftentimes with grievous travail. If only God had given some share to man—if only God had given him the child-bearing!” Thus she reasoned; and I answered: “Methinks there is much reason on thy side.”—Now to our point again!

Some men say, “What need have I to take a wife? I have no labour; I have no children to break my sleep at night; I have the less expense by far. Why should I undertake this travail? If I fall ill, my servants will care for me better than she would.” Thus thou sayest, and I say the contrary: for a woman careth better for her husband than any other in the world. And not him alone, but the whole house, and all that needeth her care. Hear what Solomon saith: “He that possesseth a good wife, beginneth a possession.”—“Well,” saith another, “I will not take a wife, but rather keep a mistress; then at least I shall be cared for, and my house and my household.”—Nay, I tell thee: for thus the woman will be set on laying up for herself alone: all her study will be of stealing; and, seeing things go ill, she careth not, but saith within herself: “Why should I pain myself to look so closely into every little matter? When I am grown old, I shall no longer be welcome in this house.”... Wherefore, I say, it is better to take a wife... and when thou hast taken her, take heed to live as every good Christian should live. Dost thou know who knoweth this? That man knoweth it who hath her, the good housewife, that ruleth the whole household well. She seeth to the granary, she keepeth it clean, that no defilement may enter therein. She keepeth the jars of oil, and noteth them well:—This jar is to use; and that jar is to keep. She guardeth it, that naught may fall therein, and that neither dog nor other beast come nigh it. She setteth all her study and all her care that the jars be not spilt. She ordereth the salt meats, first in the salting and afterward in the keeping, she cleanseth them and ordereth them:—This here is to sell, and that there is to keep. She seeth to the spinning, and then to the making of linen cloth from the yarn. She selleth the bran, and with the money she buyeth yet more cloth. She giveth heed to the

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wine-casks, lest their hoops should break or the wine leak at any point. She provideth the household with all things. She doth not as the hired servant, who stealeth of all that passeth through her hands, and who careth not for the things as they go away; for the stuff is not her own, therefore she is slow to pain herself and hath no great love for them. If a man have neither wife nor other to rule his household, knowest thou how it is with the house? I know, and I will tell thee. If he be rich, and have plenty of grain, the sparrows and the moles eat their fill thereof. It is not set in order, but all so scattered abroad that the whole house is the fouler for it. If he have oil, it is all neglected and spilt; when the jars break and the oil is spilled, he casteth a little earth on the spot, and all is done! And his wine? When at last he cometh to the cask, he draweth the wine without further thought; yet perchance the cask showeth a crevice behind, and the wine wasteth. Or again a hoop or two is started, yet it may go its way for him; or the wine turneth to vinegar, or becometh utterly corrupt. In his bed, knowest thou how he sleepeth? He sleepeth in a pit, even as the sheets chance to have been tumbled upon the bed; for they are never changed until they are torn. Even so in his dining-hall; here on the ground are melon-rinds, bones, peelings of salad, everything left lying on the ground almost without pretence of sweeping. Knowest thou how it is with his table? The cloth is laid with so little care that no man ever removeth it till it be covered with filth. The trenchers are but sparingly wiped, the dogs lick and wash them. His pipkins are all foul with grease: go and see how they stand! Knowest thou how such a man liveth? even as a brute beast. I say that it cannot be well for a man to live thus alone—Ladies, make your curtesy to me. . . .

The next sermon is on the same text and the same subject: though specially intended for the daughters, it is still more outspoken than its predecessor.

My beloved, seeing that we showed yesterday the love which ought to be between wife and husband, yet we showed it not fully: for sometimes their love of each other will become carnal and displeasing to God. Wherefore we will speak this morning

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of the manner in which each ought to love the other. . . . For ignorance excuseth not from sin. . . . So for example of a priest who undertaketh to do his priestly work, that is, to consecrate the Lord's Body, and knoweth not the manner nor the words of consecration, how wouldst thou hold this man excused? Nay, verily, he sinneth even in that he doeth not as he should. Hear now what befel once upon a time; for this is to our present point. There were two priests who spake together, and the one said unto the other, "How sayest thou the words of consecration for Christ's Body?" "I" (quoth the other) "I say *Hoc est corpus meum*." Then began they to dispute one with the other: "Thou sayest not well"—"Nay, it is thou who sayest ill"—and, as they disputed thus, there came another priest to whom they told the whole matter, and who said: "Neither the one saith well, nor the other, for the true words are: *Hoc est corpusso meusso*": and proceeded by demonstration: "Thou seest how he saith *corpusso*, wherefore the adjective should be *meusso*; therefore (I say) henceforth say ye nought else but: "*Hoc est corpusso meusso*." To which speech the others consented not: wherefore they accorded together to ask a parish priest hard by, going to him of set purpose and laying the case before him. Then the parish priest answering said: "Ha, what needeth all this ado? I go to it right simply; I say an *Ave Maria* over the Host!"—Now, I ask thee, are those men excused? Seest thou not that they make men adore as God a mere piece of bread? Be sure that each of them committeth a most deadly sin, seeing that it was their bounden duty to do after the manner which Jesus Christ hath ordained to Holy Church. So I say also that, whatsoever a man doeth, it is his bounden duty to know all that pertaineth to that thing. . . . But the mother sinneth more than the daughter, if she teach not as she ought. I say that the mother should teach her under pain of mortal sin; for otherwise she setteth her daughter in grievous peril, together with her husband. . . . Moreover, ye confessors, whensoever such folk come into your hands, take heed that ye admonish them shrewdly. For whence cometh this?—from not knowing that which they should know. In old days, this sacrament was wont to be held in the greatest devotion, and no girl went to her husband without confession

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and communion. Men had much more devotion to the sacraments than they have in these days. . . .

Moreover I say, thou art not excused by thine evil purpose: for there are some men and women who say they love not to hear such things in public sermons.—Why wilt thou not hear?—Because I would fain do after mine own fashion, and mine ignorance will hold me excused—That is as the prophet David saith: “He would not understand that he might do well”: he would not hear, that he might do after his own will.—Oh (quoth he) I do it not through unwillingness to do well! These things are not lawful matter for sermons, therefore I will not hear—What! how then, if they are lawful to do, how (I say) is it not lawful for me to admonish thee? A hit, a palpable hit, in thy teeth! Knowest thou what? Thou art like unto Madonna Saragia.<sup>1</sup> Lo! I will tell thee what befel once upon a time in Siena. There was a lady called Madonna Saragia, who loved well those great cherries of the Mark. She had a vineyard that lay out there—you know, out towards the convent of Munistero. One May, therefore, when her farmer-bailiff came to Siena, Madonna Saragia asked him: “Hast thou then no cherries yet in the vineyard?” “O,” quoth he, “I waited till they should be a little riper.” And she: “See then that thou bring them on Saturday, or come not hither to Siena again!” The bailiff promised; and on the Saturday he took a great basket of cherries and came to Siena and brought them to the lady. When therefore she saw him, she made much of him, and took the basket. “Thrice welcome! Oh, how much good thou hast done me!” and, taking the basket apart into her private chamber, she began to eat the cherries by the handful; (they were fine and large, they were cherries of the Mark!) To be brief, she took a skin-full of the cherries. Then, when her husband came home to dinner, the lady took a little basket of these fruit, and laid them on the table, and said: “The bailiff is come, and hath brought us a few cherries.” And when the meal was finished, she took these cherries and began to eat thereof, in the bailiff’s presence. And as she ate,

<sup>1</sup> *I.e. Mrs Cherry.* Such nicknames are still common in Italy: one well-known citizen of a little Southern town has lately earned the singular gastronomical sobriquet of *Ceci* (*chick-peas*).

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she took them one by one and made seven bites of each cherry; and in eating she said to the bailiff: "What eating is there of cherries out in the country?" "Lady," quoth he, "we eat them as ye ate even now in your room: we eat them by the handful!" "Ugh! la!" cried she, "How saith the fellow? fie on thee, knave!" "Lady," quoth he again, "we eat them even as I have said." . . .

Hereupon the saint goes on to comment on Rom. i, 27, 1 Thess. iv, 4, 1 Cor. vii, 4, Exodus xx, 14, and Ezekiel xviii, 6.

## 118. MEDIEVAL FREETHINKERS

(Bern. Sen. *Opp.* ed. de la Haye, vol. 1, p. 83, 1.)

THE first pit of slime [Genesis xiv, 10] is incredulity or default of faith. For very many folk, considering the wicked life of monks and friars and nuns and clergy, are shaken by this—nay, oftentimes fail in faith, and believe in naught higher than the roof of their own house, not esteeming those things to be true which have been written concerning our faith, but believing them to have been written by the cozening invention of man and not by God's inspiration; having no faith in the divine Scriptures or in the holy Doctors, even as the Prophet testifieth concerning the unfaithful Christians of this present time, saying: "Nor were they counted faithful in his covenant." From hence it followeth that they believe not in the power of the keys, despise the sacraments of the church, hold that the soul hath no existence, neither shun vices nor respect virtues, neither fear hell nor desire heaven, but cling with all their hearts to transitory things and resolve that this world shall be their paradise. All floweth from this one source of incredulity; since they cannot distinguish betwixt the office of prelates and priests, and their vices. For albeit the life of many clerics be full of crimes, yet there resideth in them a holy and venerable authority, as will appear in my sermon next following.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare the complaint of Benvenuto da Imola, who was a professor at Bologna about the time of St Bernardino's birth. Commenting on Dante's mention of Priscian (*Inf.* xv, 106), he says "he was a monk and apostatized in order to gain greater fame and glory, as we oftentimes see now in the case of many men

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Johann Busch was born at Zwolle in 1399. He showed brilliant scholarship as a boy; but as a youth he chose to join the same congregation of Austin Canons to which his contemporary Thomas à Kempis belonged. In 1440 he became Subprior of Wittenburg, and began his long and arduous career as reformer of monasteries under a commission from the Pope and the Council of Bâle. In this work he attained more success than any of his contemporaries except the distinguished Cardinal Nicolaus von Cusa. His chief writings were (i) a charming chronicle of the monastery of Windesheim, and (ii) the *Liber de Reformatione Monasteriorum*, a minute and often very humorous record of his life's work. The edition here used is that of K. Grube (Halle, 1887). A translation of it was begun, but never completed, in the *British Magazine* for April, 1841, etc.; and the reader may there find some strange things for which there is no place here. Miss Eckenstein's account of these visitations in her *Woman under Monasticism* is quite worthless; she takes it at second-hand from a not always trustworthy monograph by Karl Grube. See Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, Camb. Univ. Press, 1922, pp. 670 ff.

### 119. A DETERMINED PREACHER

SIR GERARD DEBELER, my own preacher at Halle, whom I brought thither from Hildesheim, was a man of exceeding zeal for the people of God and well-beloved of them; oftentimes he preached to the people that they should keep God's commandments. For he preached three or four sermons on a single precept of our Lord, until all in his parish of St Mary the Virgin at the City Market should keep it effectually. And when some showed themselves too slow to begin keeping it, then he said publicly to all the folk of both sexes in congregation, "Wherefore are ye so slow to begin keeping this precept of God? Perchance ye may say: 'My father and mother were good folk, just and truthful and good Christians; I know that they have gone long since to the Kingdom of Heaven; why then are we now compelled so strictly to keep God's precepts, beyond what they then did?' Hear what I answer thereunto. Hast thou sealed letters to show that thy parents, who were so good, went indeed to heaven? I would gladly see them; but I trow ye have none such. Now I say to thee: If thy parents

who speak ill of the Faith that they may seem great philosophers; as though they believed that saying of Galen, that the Christians have few men of any account because they are involved in many errors" (*Comentum*, ed. Lacaita, vol. I, p. 522). Janssen's implication that such freethought was born of Bible translations in the later Middle Ages is demonstrably false.

## A DETERMINED PREACHER

lived as thou now livest, and kept not God's commandments, then I have sealed letters to show that they are now burning in hell fire; and my letters are the missals that lie on the altar, wherein are written gospels which our Lord God Jesus Christ sealed as true with His own blood. For therein is written: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*; and again, *If any one love Me, he will keep My word*, and many suchlike. Now such transgressors of God's commandments as died and deceased in their wicked sins are now in hell, as the Catholic Faith holdeth, and as Jesus Christ's gospel saith; but those who kept His commandments in this life, though their bodies be dead, yet in soul they now live with God in heaven, and at the resurrection of the dead they shall possess eternal life in body and soul, with God and the holy angels and all the saints. Think therefore where are now your parents who seemed to you so good according to this world; think thereon, and amend your lives!"

How much good that preacher did among the people at Halle by his notable sermons, I have told more fully above in the Reform of the Monastery of Neuwerk. He did not quote much of Scripture,<sup>1</sup> but went straight to the point and made it plain to all men's eyes, saying, "Thou with the long cloak and the parti-coloured hosen—thou Rathsherr there—thou rich man—thou poor man—what wilt thou say to these things when thou liest on thy back breathing forth thy ghost? Think these things over now beforehand, that thou mayest study to amend thy life and keep God's commandments strictly with all thy might."

## 120. EXORCISM BY COMMON SENSE

(*Lib. Ref.* III, 21, p. 701.)

ONCE as I went from Halle to Calbe, a man who was ploughing ran forth from the field and said that his wife was possessed with a devil, beseeching me most instantly that I would enter his house (for it was not far from our way) and liberate her from this demon. At last, touched by his prayers,

<sup>1</sup> A term which included not only the Bible, but Church Doctors, etc.



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I granted his request, coming down from my chariot and following him to his house. When therefore I had looked into the woman's state, I found that she had many fantasies, for that she was wont to sleep and eat too little, whence she fell into feebleness of brain and thought herself possessed by a demon; yet there was no such thing in her case. So I told her husband to see that she kept a good diet, that is, good meat and drink, especially in the evening when she would go to sleep; "for then" (said I) "when all her work is over, she should drink what is called in the vulgar tongue *een warme iaute*, that is a quart of hot ale, as hot as she can stand, without bread but with a little butter of the bigness of a hazel-nut. And when she hath drunken it to the end, let her go forthwith to bed; thus will she soon get a whole brain again."

One of the Preacher's Manuals which became so popular in the later Middle Ages was entitled *Dormi Secure*. This brief appellation is explained by the sub-title of the book, which runs thus: "Sermons for Saints' Days throughout the year, very notable and useful to all priests, prelates, and chaplains. Which sermons are called *Dormi Secure*, or 'Sleep Without Care,' seeing that they can easily be incorporated without great study and preached to the people." There is a companion volume of *Dormi Secure* sermons for the regular Sundays of the year, with practically the same sub-title. The author was a Franciscan named John of Verden or Werden, who flourished according to Wadding in 1330 or, if we are to believe more recent students, a century later. The following Extract is from fol. xxi a of the edition published by Jehan Petit (Paris, 1517); the book passed through at least thirty editions.

Although the Church refused for centuries to pronounce upon the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, and the great schoolmen of the thirteenth century were against it, and the learned Dominican Order combated the doctrine almost to the last, yet the current of opinion among the masses ran more and more strongly in its favour, and this Extract exemplifies how popular preachers explained away the contrary decision of great Saints and Doctors in the past. The Preacher has just been attempting to show that even Mohammedans hold the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, supporting this assertion by texts from the Koran which, even if genuine, are of course utterly beside the point. He then proceeds:

### 121. A SAINT IN PURGATORY

VERILY I say that the Virgin Mary was conceived without original sin; for this is confirmed by examples; and in especial

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by three examples which came to pass in the case of three great Doctors of holy Mother Church; to wit, Master Alexander Neckam,<sup>1</sup> the lord Cardinal Bonaventura, and St Bernard. First then this doctrine was confirmed and proved by a miraculous example which came to pass in Master Alexander Neckam's case; of whom we read that thrice in succession he proclaimed how he would determine [in the Schools] that the Blessed Virgin had been conceived in original sin; yet was he ever prevented by sickness. At length he purposed and promised finally to declare and determine this conclusion; yet once again, the night before, he fell into great sickness and suffering. Then he called upon the Blessed Virgin to succour him; in virtue of which invocation she came by night when all was wrapt in silence and only Neckam watched, saying unto him: "This sickness is fallen upon thee for that thou strivest to prove that I was conceived in original sin." Then she took a knife from her handmaiden and cut from the Master's side a great and foul inward ulcer; after which she took her needle and sewed up the whole wound with silken thread. Then, when the Blessed Virgin was gone, the Master found himself whole and sound; wherefore he called to the scholar who slept with him in his room, and learned more fully and perfectly how the matter stood. Therefore he afterwards put away that impious opinion of his, and wrote a great book how the Virgin had been conceived without any original sin. In which book he expounded of the Blessed Virgin Mary that text of the fourth Chapter of Solomon's Song, "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee," as showing that she had no spot either of original or of actual sin.

Secondly, the doctrine was proved by a miraculous example in the case of the lord Cardinal Bonaventura, because it is still maintained in Book III, Dist. IV, Quest. 2, r. 3 [of his Commentary on the Sentences] that the Virgin Mary was conceived in original sin. Wherefore there is related of him an event

<sup>1</sup> A distinguished English scholar who became Abbot of Cirencester and died in 1227. A MS. formerly in possession of the Earl of Arundel had the following entry: "In the month of September 1157 Prince Richard was born to Henry II at Windsor; and that same night saw the birth at St Albans of Alexander Neckam, whose mother suckled Richard at her right breast and Alexander at her left." Bonaventura is of course the Saint, who was only canonized in 1482.

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which befel at Paris. A certain devout friar of the Brethren Minor<sup>1</sup> prayed frequently and devoutly every night in the choir. As he was thus in prayer, he heard a buzzing as it were of a fly, and marvelled what this might be, and what might be portended by such a sound at so unwonted a time. Then he listened more carefully; and for many nights he ever heard that same sound over the altar of the Virgin Mary. When therefore he had oftentimes heard this with much wonder, then he cried: "I adjure thee by our Lord Jesus Christ, tell me who thou art." Then he heard a voice saying, "I am Bonaventura." Whereunto he made answer, "O most excellent Master, how is it with you and wherefore make ye such a sound?" Then the other made answer, "It shall be well with me, who am of the number of such as shall be saved; nevertheless, seeing that I held that conclusion that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, therefore I endure this my purgatory and pain over the altar of the Blessed Virgin; and, after that I shall have been purged, I shall fly up to heaven." Wherefore Bonaventura may say that word of the Psalmist: "For this conclusion we are mortified all the day long."<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, it hath been proved by the example of St Bernard's case, who held that the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived in original sin. . . . Wherefore it is related of him that, after his death, he appeared to a certain man with a stain, and told how he bare that blemish for that he held the conception of the Blessed Virgin in original sin. Wherefore it hath been plainly proved by three examples that the glorious Virgin was conceived without original sin. For to this effect it is well said in St John's first epistle, the fifth chapter, "There are three that bear witness in heaven," to wit, in favour of the Virgin Mary, that she was conceived without original sin. And again in the third chapter of Daniel, "These three as with one mouth praised God," to wit, because He preserved His Mother from original sin.

<sup>1</sup> The Franciscans in general soon decided in favour of the popular opinion, and it was their support which did much to secure its final victory. It was all the more distressing to them that their great Doctor should have already pledged himself to the doctrine of St Bernard and other great theologians of an earlier time.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xliii, 22, Vulg. The preacher has taken the liberty of altering *propter te* into *de illa conclusione*.

## POPES AND HERESY

The Blessed James of the Mark—Beatus Jacobus de Marchia—was born in 1391 and died in 1476. After brilliant studies, he joined the Franciscans at the age of nineteen, was raised to the rank of Preacher in his Order, and preached almost daily for forty years, during thirteen of which he traversed the greater part of Europe, even as far as Scandinavia and Russia. In 1460 he was appointed Inquisitor; later on, he refused the Archbishopric of Milan. His missionary tours into outlying mountain villages brought him into contact with the Fraticelli—heretics bred of the persecutions to which the stricter Franciscans had been subjected by their laxer brethren—and, in spite of his naturally merciful disposition, he became their conscientious and relentless persecutor. The two following Extracts are from his voluminous Answer to an Open Letter which the Fraticelli had written in their own defence, and in which they insisted much on the grave suspicion of heresy against John XXII (see Extracts 96–7 above). The letter of the Fraticelli is published in the *Scelta di Curiosità Letterarie* (Bologna, 1865); the Answer of St James is in Baluze-Mansi, *Miscellanea*, vol. II, pp. 595 ff.: it was written after 1449, but probably not long after.

### 122. POPES AND HERESY

(p. 599.)

AND again I say unto thee, [O heretic], that albeit certain Supreme Pontiffs have died in unfaith, yet thou shalt ever find that, when one Pope died in heresy, a Catholic Pope immediately succeeded him. Wherefore it cannot be found, in the whole series of the list of Supreme Pontiffs, that any two Popes were successively and immediately heretics; and thus it is not said that faith hath failed without qualification [*simpliciter*] in the order of Popes; since, when our Lord said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," he said it not only for him but for the whole Church. But ye short-sighted Michaelists<sup>1</sup> hold as heretics all the Popes who have succeeded the aforesaid John [XXII] and all who favour, believe in, or adhere to him; wherefore ye deceive yourselves and have become heretics. . . . (p. 601). Yet, supposing that a Pope were heretical, and not publicly condemned, still bearing his office; supposing that a simple person, not a public person, enquired of that Lord Pope concerning the unity of the faith, and the Pope then instructed him in that heresy which he himself held for

<sup>1</sup> Michael of Cesena, Minister-General of the Franciscans, had played a leading part in the revolt against John XXII.

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

a truth; then the man thus instructed, if he be not made conscious [of his error] from some other quarter, is not to be adjudged an heretic, seeing that he believeth himself to be instructed in the Catholic faith. If therefore the simple Brethren, and the rest of the clergy and laity who hear Pope John [XXII] proclaiming his own decrees [concerning the Poverty of Christ] as catholic,—even supposing that they were heretical—if these men, I say, have believed in them, they are not to be condemned as heretics, especially since they are considered by all to be in the majority; thou therefore, being a Michaelist, art thou not an heretic? For in a matter so weighty the Michaelists ought to have looked to the determination of the Holy Church, and more especially of the Roman Court,<sup>1</sup> to which it specially pertaineth to decide such points as concern the essentials of faith; but these [Fratricelli], with the rashness habitual to heretics, refer to themselves and to their own knowledge, thus plunging into heresy and apostasy.

### 123. THE ODOUR OF HERESY

(p. 600.)

BUT I desire thee to be won over to thine own salvation; wherefore know for certain that it is a property of the Catholic faith, which was in St Peter, to grow under persecution and oppression, and to wax more worthy. But the sect of Michaelists faileth and groweth more debased under persecution. For all Catholic Doctors attribute to the true Faith that it waxeth ever in tribulation and oppression, as is clear from the times of the martyrs, when a hundredfold more were converted than those who were slain; and the more the Church was oppressed, the more glorious she rose up again; wherefore that most excellent Doctor Hilary saith: "This is proper to the Church, that she conquereth when she is hurt; when she is rebuked, then she understandeth; when she hath abandoned, then doth she obtain." And Cassiodorus: "The Church of God hath this quality in especial, to flourish under persecution,

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the Pope in conjunction with his cardinals, to which latter body the writer has just before attributed the primary duty of correcting the Pope in case of error.

## THE ODOUR OF HERESY

to grow in oppression, to conquer under injury, and to stand all the firmer when men deem her overcome." So also Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, cap. 71) and Gregory (*Moralia*, xviii, 13). Moreover it is yet more marvellous, as the aforementioned Doctors assert, that the Church unresisting subdueth her persecutors, and prevaiileth more without resistance than when she withstandeth her adversaries; but this sect of Michaelists had at first most mighty and powerful defenders; yet now it hath but gross boors. Especially mayest thou see how all other rites which do and did exist have taken their source and origin from St Peter and his successors, but with the lapse of time they have grown in riches by the dignity, wisdom, virtue, and multitude of their adherents; while all other rites which were not [founded] in St Peter and his Catholic successors have so dwindled that no man is left in them who knew his own rite and could defend it and was able even to expound it. . . . Therefore the Greeks, and all other sects which have departed from the faith of Peter, have dwindled in wisdom, honour, and power; and all other heretical sects (which up to St Augustine's time numbered two hundred, as he himself saith in his *Book of Heresies*) have failed, and have all ended in lechery. . . (610). Moreover, in God's Church there are always holy men through whom God worketh many miracles; for ever [*apparent lacuna in text*] even as now at this present time God hath raised twenty-three dead men through St Bernardino of the Friars Observant of our Order, as approved by the commissaries deputed by the supreme Pontiffs of the Holy Roman Church; thrice, at three different times, hath the Holy Roman Church enquired into the miracles aforesaid, and innumerable others which God worketh through His servant Brother Bernardino, as they have been received and approved by the Holy Roman Church, and as I have seen with mine own eyes; as appeareth also by the [votive] images of gold and silver that hang in testimony of his miracles within the church of St Francis at Aquila; so also of many other saints who have been since John XXII, but whom ye condemn together with the whole Church. And it is marvellous indeed that in the case of all heretics and schismatics, since they have withdrawn from the Church, God hath wrought no miracles among them (for

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

miracles, as Riccardus and Scotus say, are wrought by God for confirmation of faith in Him); but it is never found of you who make a church of your own, nor hath it ever been heard of that any of you have wrought any miracle, except that in burning they stink like putrid flesh.<sup>1</sup> Whereof ye have an example in Fabriano, while Pope Nicholas V was there; some of these heretics were burned, and the whole city stank for three days long; and this I know because I smelt the stench of them for those three days even in my convent; and—whereas I had persuaded them all to come back to the faith, all of whom returned and confessed and communicated, and wept tears of compunction, and were thus justified even though they had relapsed—yet one who was called Chiuso of Fabriano, the treasurer of those heretics, would never return. I testify before God that he never called upon God to help him, or the Virgin, or any Saint; nor did he pray that God would forgive his sins; but as one desperate and withered he continued saying: "The fire cannot burn me!" and I bear witness before God that he burned for three days long, while men brought fresh wood again and again! [The Saint goes on to accuse the Fraticelli of the same crimes which they themselves laid to the charge of the orthodox clergy.]

### 124. ENGLISH TAILS

(Caxton's *Golden Legend*, Temple Classics, vol. III, p. 201.)

AFTER this, St Austin entered into Dorsetshire, and came into a town whereas were wicked people who refused his doctrine and preaching utterly, and drove him out of the town, casting on him the tails of thornbacks, or like fishes; wherefore he besought almighty God to show His judgment on them, and God sent to them a shameful token; for the children that were born after in that place had tails, as it is said, till they had repented them. It is said commonly that this fell at Strood in Kent, but blessed be God at this day is no such deformity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *corrumpuntur* of the text is an evident slip for *comburentur*.

<sup>2</sup> For this curious and widespread legend of English Tails, and the different causes assigned for the phenomenon by foreigners, see Dr George Neilson's *Caudatus Anglicus* (Edinburgh, 1896).

## PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOUR

Johann Geiler, born at Kaisersberg near Schaffhausen in 1445, became Doctor of Theology at Bâle and Freiburg, but accepted, at the invitation of Bishop and Chapter, the Cathedral Preachership at Strasbourg (1478). Here his spiritual fervour, his hatred of abuses, and the raciness of his style, raised him to a unique position among contemporary preachers. He died at his work in 1510, looking forward to an impending catastrophe from which his strict orthodoxy shrank, while he fully recognized its necessity. Preaching before the Emperor Maximilian, a few years before his death, he cried: "Since neither Pope nor Emperor, kings nor bishops, will reform our life, God will send a man for the purpose. I hope to see that day... but I am too old. Many of you will see it; think then, I pray you, of these words." See L. Dacheux, *Jean Geiler*, Paris, 1876.

### 125. PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOUR

(Geiler, *Peregrinus*. Strasbourg, 1513. Mos. xvii.)

THIS much is certain, that all who would live piously in Christ Jesus suffer persecutions, (2 Thess. iii:) which is true of all Religious, Clerics, and Layfolk. Religious, I say; for if anyone in a monastery would fain keep the Rule, would fain be chaste, live continently, obey, and keep the ceremonies, then he is mocked by the rest.<sup>1</sup> "Lo!" say they, "our pietist would fain be wiser than all others; while so many learned men and luminaries of the world live thus, he alone striveth against them!" I confess indeed that these are luminaries of the world, but such as shine for themselves and their followers to everlasting damnation; 'tis great pity that any such should perish!... They say against such a pietist, in the words of the second chapter of Wisdom, "Come, let us lie in wait for him, because he is not to our turn and he is contrary to our doings!" Truly they say thus; for they stand round him as he sitteth among them like an owl among the birds, or Daniel among the lions, or Stephen among those that stoned him. Nor is it only there [in monasteries] but among clerics also it is the same, if any of the number wear the proper garments and tonsure, living without covetousness, content with a single benefice, chaste, avoiding the company of women, an almsgiver, charit-

<sup>1</sup> This is a frequent complaint in the later Middle Ages. The lax Religious, says St Catherine of Siena, "fall upon such as would fain keep their Rule, as ravening wolves upon lambs, scoffing and scorning them" (*Dialogo*, c. 125; cf. c. 162).



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able, temperate, keeping his fasts, no frequenter of banquets, gentle, peaceful, not vindictive, ready for divine things, reading masses and praying and chanting, and so forth. Such a man, I say, is a laughing-stock. "Lo, here is our daily fellow! he sticks in the choir like a nail in a tile!" All inveigh against him, even as the birds flock together and chatter round an owl; each will have his peck at him. "Oh!" quoth they, "this fellow was ever singular!" O holy singularity! many are called, but few are chosen: broad is the way to damnation, and many shall go thereby; narrow is the path to life, and few are they that find it. So also are laymen and laywomen mocked if they betake themselves and their friends to church on Sundays, and to confession in this season of Lent, or if they clothe themselves and their wives and children in becoming garb; and why should I make a long story? It is truly written in the 12th chapter of Job: "The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn; the lamp, despised in the thoughts of the rich, is ready for the time appointed"; for which see St Gregory's *Moralizations upon Job*. (He who will, let him here extend this discourse throughout all the deadly sins, as we have done above in speaking of clerics.) Wherefore halt not nor go thou backward for all their derision, but go ever forwards, seeing that this is no new thing, but hath flowed down to us from ancient days, and all men are in the same case.

## KNOTTY PROBLEMS

Strasbourg had followed from time immemorial the common medieval custom of denying Communion and Christian burial to condemned criminals. Geiler attacked this custom; the magistrates and all the Religious of the city, except one, defended it. The Bishop tried to settle the dispute by consulting his clergy: here again opinions were divided. At last, in 1482, the Papal Nuncio consulted the University of Heidelberg, which decided in Geiler's favour. Yet it was not until 1485 that Geiler won his point, with the help of his pupil Peter Schott, himself a distinguished patrician of the city. For the whole negotiation see L. Dacheux (*Jean Geiler*, pp. 45 ff.), who adds: "When Strassburg was incorporated with France, the condemned were again denied Communion, according to the custom of the Gallican Church." In Sicily, they were even refused spiritual help of any kind until the middle of the sixteenth century. (Th. Trede, *Heidentum*, u.s.w. Gotha, 1890, pt. III, p. 349; cf. G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, vol. I, 1923, App. 13.) The following Extract is from Peter Schott's letter to the Nuncio, printed in his rare *Lucubrationculae* (Strasbourg, 1497). After a preface defending Geiler against the slanders of those who were interested in upholding the ancient abuses, Schott proceeds (fol. 116):

### 126. KNOTTY PROBLEMS

FIRST, as to the criminals led to execution, whereas ye desired to know the opinion of the Heidelberg Doctors, if ye had put off your departure for four days, ye might have seen the concordant opinions both of the theologians and of the jurists, that the Sacrament of the Eucharist should by no means be refused to such persons, if only they show signs of repentance and desire it. But there are other points also, though they have not as yet given rise to such open conflict, whereof this eminent Doctor [Geiler], stirred by the same zeal for God's glory, prayeth that he may be confirmed and strengthened by men of learning and great authority with a more settled and certain mind, lest the truth be again gainsaid when it is thus constantly preached in public as need requireth. These then, *inter cetera*, are the chief points of doubt. One statute of the city of Strassburg ordaineth that whoso entereth into a Religious Order, however wealthy he be, may not bear into the monastery more than 100 pounds (or 200 gold pieces of the Rhine); the rest he is compelled to leave to his heirs as though he were intestate. Another statute ordaineth that a citizen of Strassburg who slayeth a stranger or foreigner (that is, a non-citizen)

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is free of all penalty on payment of 30 pence (or about three Rhenish florins); yet if the same should steal from a foreigner, though it were but a little, he should be hanged. If again any man, even a citizen, should slay a citizen, albeit in self-defence and without undue violence, he is slain. Again, it is ordained by statute that naught may be left by will or by deathbed gift, even to holy places and pious uses. We would know, then, are the makers or enforcers of such statutes in a state of salvation? Again, they give public warranty or safe conduct against justice, so that the man thus privileged need not abide by the law. Again, they exact promiscuously from the clergy taxes and imposts and tolls, even upon the necessities of life such as wine and corn.

Again, they have set on high in the cathedral a certain boorish image under the organ, which they thus misuse; On the sacred days of Whitsuntide themselves, whereon folk from all parts of the diocese are wont to enter the Cathedral in procession with relics of saints and devotions, singing and chanting glad songs to God's praise, then a certain buffoon hideth behind that image and, with uncouth gestures and loud voice, belcheth forth profane and indecorous canticles to drown the hymns of those that come in, grinning meanwhile and mocking at them; so that he not only turneth their devotion to distraction and their groans to rude laughter, but impedeth even the clergy in their chants of God; nay, in the case of the divine solemnities of the mass (for such are sung not far from that spot), they inflict abominable and execrable disturbance, far and wide, upon such as are zealous for the worship of the Church, or rather of God. Moreover, the *Bürgermeister* hath his own place in the Cathedral, wherein he is wont promiscuously to make answer and give audience to parties called before him; moreover, he hath been accustomed to talk with others there, even at times when masses are being sung by priests in the vicinity, who are troubled by so great murmur and noise. Moreover, they commit other irreverences also in the holy places, buying and selling in the church porch, though that too be a consecrated spot, and bearing fowls or pigs or vessels through the church, even in times of divine service, by which walking they obey the devil rather than God. Moreover,

## KNOTTY PROBLEMS

especially between the Feast of St Nicholas and the Octave of the Innocents [Dec. 6 to Jan. 4] a boy is clad in episcopal ornaments and singeth collects in the church; he bestoweth public benedictions, and a masked crowd troubleth all right and justice in the churches. Moreover, the Lord's Day is thus belittled by a corrupt abuse; for there is a statute that on that day and no other the bakers from without the city shall bring together a great mass of bread, and offer it for sale only at that time whereat the people should be the more intent upon divine worship. Again, whatsoever holy day falleth on a Friday, even though it be that of the Blessed Virgin, yet the public market is not forbidden. Seeing that all these things stir the wrath of our zealous man, he would fain first be informed what he must think of these things. Are all who do such in mortal sin, or all who, (having the power,) hinder them not? Secondly: Should those hold their peace or speak against these things, who have been commissioned to preach in the bishop's stead?

### 127. PAUL'S WALK

Guillaume Pepin, Prior of the Dominicans at Evreux, was a famous preacher who died in 1532 or 1533. His works were reprinted in a collected form at Cologne in 1610. The following is from his *Sermones de Imitatione Sanctorum* (Venice, 1594, fol. 106a).

NOTE that many come into the Temple (that is, to Church) in the spirit indeed, but not always in a holy or good spirit. Here we must mark that some come thither in divers spirits. First, in the spirit of covetousness and greed, as many prebendaries who come to the canonical hours and to the funeral services in order to receive distributions [of money], and who would not otherwise come at all. How then do these? certainly, for the most part, they are present only at the beginning and end of the service; for the rest of the time they wander about the church, spending the time in many confabulations and levities with layfolk or other persons. Yet this abuse is strictly forbidden [in two separate passages of Canon Law]. Again, those enter the Church in the spirit of greed who procure ordination or promotion for the sake of benefices and

## LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

dignities, that they may thus live in greater comfort and ease. The same may be said of such as enter into endowed Religious Orders, and similar fraternities. A second class come thither in the spirit of ambition and pride, as many do who stalk in pompously on feast days, that they may be seen and honoured, or praised for the magnificence of their dress; in which pomp and abuse women are more excessive than men. . . . The third are those who come in the spirit of fornication and lechery, of which kind are many incontinent, vagabond and inconstant women, who wander about the church and the holy places to see and be seen; who pollute the holy temple, at least in their hearts. The fourth come to the temple in the spirit of surfeiting and drunkenness, as do many countryfolk who keep certain gild commemorations, in honour whereof (as they say) they come together on certain days of the year and hold their feasts within the church,<sup>1</sup> perchance because they have no houses large enough to hold so large a company; and thus with their surfeiting and drunkenness, with their filthiness and clamour, they profane and pollute the sanctuary of God. Wherein they resemble those Corinthians of the early church, who, after taking the revered Sacrament of the Altar, feasted magnificently within the church: and whom St Paul reproveth (1 Cor. xi, 22), saying, "What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God: and put them to shame that have not?" For [as it is written in Canon Law], the church is no place for meetings or assemblies, or for the tumult of bawling voices. Enough in this place. [He repeats the same complaints more briefly in another sermon, *Fer. 2 a post 4, Dom. Quad.*]

<sup>1</sup> These are of course the *Church Ales* which the puritan party among the Reformers laboured so hard to put down. In many English parishes *Church Houses* were built for these feasts.

## ABUSE DESTROYETH NOT USE

More's English Works (as Principal Lindsay writes on p. 17 of the third volume of the *Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.*) "deserve more consideration than they usually receive." Yet he vouchsafes them no further consideration; and later on Mr Routh mentions one of them only to disparage it (p. 80). Since they are practically inaccessible to the general reader (for the folio costs from £25 to £50 according to its condition) I give in these volumes some stories which show him at his best as a raconteur, and of which the first is doubly interesting for the use that Shakespeare made of it. In the *Dialogue* More is arguing in his own person against a disputant of quasi-heretical leanings, generally alluded to as the *Messenger* or *your Friend*.

### 128. ABUSE DESTROYETH NOT USE

(p. 198. More speaks in his own person.)

IN some countries they go a-hunting commonly on Good Friday in the morning for a common custom. Will ye break that evil custom, or cast away Good Friday? There be cathedral churches into which the country cometh with procession at Whitsuntide, and the women following the cross with many an unwomanly song, and that such honest wives as that, out of the procession, ye could not hear to speak one such foul ribaldry word as they there sing for God's sake whole ribaldrous songs, as loud as their throat can cry. Will you mend that lewd manner, or put away Whitsuntide? Ye speak of lewdness used at pilgrimages: Is there (trow ye) none used on holy days? And why do you not then advise us to put them clean away, Sundays and all? Some wax drunk in Lent of wigg<sup>1</sup> and cracknels, and yet ye would not, I trust, that Lent were fordone. Christmas, if we consider how commonly we abuse it, we may think that they take it for a time of liberty for all manner of lewdness; And yet is not Christmas to be cast away among Christian men, but men rather monished to amend their manner, and use themselves in Christmas more Christianly. . . . Now touching the evil petitions, though they that ask them were (as I trust they be not) a great people, they be not

<sup>1</sup> Or *wig*, a dry, crisp biscuit. More either means that these biscuits were ordinarily washed down with strong drink, or perhaps anticipates the modern ironical excuse which attributes certain irregularities of behaviour to "the salmon."

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yet so many that ask evil petitions of saints as there be that ask the same of God Himself. For whatsoever they will ask of any good saint, they will ask of God also. And commonly in the wild Irish, and some in Wales too, as men say, when they go forth in robbing, they bless them and pray God send them good speed, that they may meet with a good purse and do harm and take none. Shall we therefore find a fault with every man's prayer because thieves pray for speed in robbery?











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